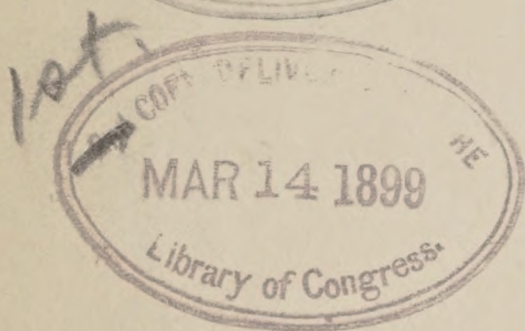
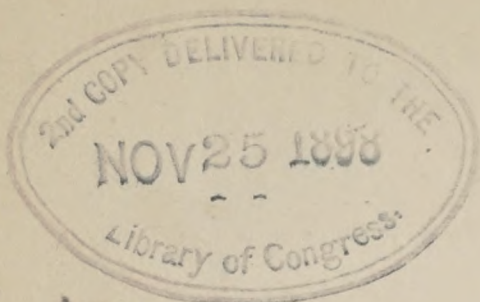


HOPE THE ~HERMIT~



EDNA LYALL



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HOPE THE HERMIT

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A NOVEL

BY

EDNA LYALL

Bayley, A. E.

friend.

AUTHOR OF "DOREEN," "WAYFARING MEN," "DONOVAN," "IN THE
GOLDEN DAYS," "TO RIGHT THE WRONG," ETC., ETC.

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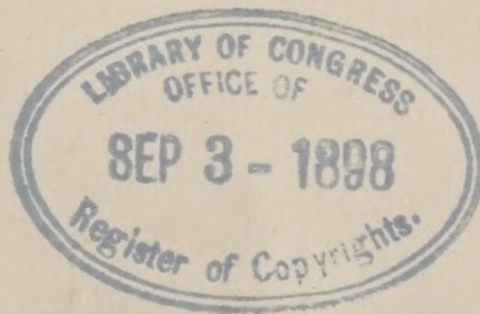
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H. J. H. Dec. 9, 1905

“ Once in a blithe greenwood, liv'd a hermit wise and good,
Whom the folks from far and near
For his counsel sought, knowing well that what he taught
The dreariest of hearts would cheer.
Though his hair was white, his eye was clear and bright
And he thus was ever wont to say:
' Though to care we are born, yet the dullest morn
Often heralds in the fairest day!'

Pray, is the hermit dead? from the forest has he fled
No, he lives to counsel all
Who an ear will lend to their wisest, truest friend,
And Hope, the hermit's name they call;
Still he sits, I ween, 'mid branches ever green,
And cheerly you may hear him say:

' Though to care we are born, yet the dullest morn
Often heralds in the fairest day!' ”

—From Chappell's “*Old English Ditties.*”

Dedicated

TO

THE REV. CANON AND MRS. RAWNSLEY

IN MEMORY OF PLEASANT HOURS AT

CROSTHWAITE

HOPE THE HERMIT

CHAPTER I

THE sun had set. A crimson glow lit up the western sky and lingered on the mountain tops, but the little white farm among the hills was already in shadow. There it stood in lonely Watendlath, and even on this summer evening in the year 1668 its walls had witnessed the joys and sorrows of many generations. Yet never had so sad a story been enacted in the old house as the one which was now drawing to a close—dying out with the day, but less peacefully.

A deep porch with stone steps led up to the thick oaken door heavily studded with nails, but wide open now to let in the summer air; in the large house-place, or kitchen, two women sat by the fire talking, and to the left a door led into a second room which, in a sudden emergency, had been converted into a guest chamber.

The guest was evidently dying. Death was written on her white face and pale lips, which contrasted so curiously with the ruddy face of the little newborn child, nestled on her arm. They were in every way a contrast. The mother, a mere girl of seventeen, wore a look of heartrending grief and anxiety; the baby was wrapt in a peace as profound and untroubled as if he had begun an existence in the Garden of Eden, instead

of being launched on the waves of this troublesome world.

‘If only your father would come,’ sighed the girl. ‘If only I could once hear him promise to care for you! Yet what use would it be? He ever promises and promises. Did he not vow at our marriage to cherish and love me—and what has it proved? For a week of happiness I have lost home and all who loved me there.’

And at this thought she fell a-crying, but was terrified to find that her sobs were quite tearless. Had not her old nurse at home once told her that the dying can shed no tears? ‘Oh, John!’ she moaned, ‘come back to me! Come back! I can’t die alone in this strange place.’

The mistress of the house, kind-hearted Mary Wilson, paused for a minute in her talk, thinking the babe had cried; but finding that all was still she took up the thread of her story again, and poured into the ears of the neighbour who had come to bear her company that night the amazing news which had stirred the quiet Cumberland farmhouse from its usual peace.

Two nights ago, just as it was growing dusk, a gentleman wearing the usual long, curled wig, and with feathers in the broad-brimmed hat which was pulled low over his brow, had knocked at the door of the farm and had begged their hospitality for his wife, who was quite unable to travel further. He had lifted the lady from the pillion and half led, half carried her into the house, whereupon Mary Wilson, seeing the plight she was in, and touched by the sweet face and golden-brown eyes which had lighted with relief as they looked into hers, hastened to make the guest-room ready. Busy with her preparations, she had never noticed the gentleman riding away from the farm, but when she came back into the house-place there was the lady all alone by the hearth crying like a tired child.

The neighbour, who had listened to all this with bated breath, made that shocked sound with her tongue against the roof of her mouth by which women can express so much.

“He shouldna hae left ye,” says I to her,’ resumed Mary Wilson. ‘But at that the leddy drew herself oop an’ says she, “My husband will coom back; he will but leave me to rest awhile.” I said nae mair an’ juist helped her to bed, but in the mornin’ I saw how ’twad be, and at cock-crow to-day the laal barn was born.’

‘A doot the gentleman will never coom back,’ said the neighbour, shaking her head ominously. ‘It’s the auld story.’

‘Mappen they’ve never been weddit,’ said Mary Wilson. ‘But I’m loth to think ill of the puir leddy. Anyhoo, she’s deein’. She’ll no be lang in this world, puir soul.’

In the next room all this had been quite audible, nor did the Cumbrian dialect at all veil the truth from the dying girl. It was perfectly familiar to her, and the words went to her heart like a sword-thrust. She drew down the little unconscious child closer to her heart, holding him with a passionate devotion, as if her frail arms could shield him from the hard, cruel world.

‘It’s a lie,’ she whispered. ‘You are his true son and heir, my sweet one. Oh, John! why don’t you come back to me? Why did you make me promise not to tell them our name?’

What was that last thing they had said? She was dying? Would not be long in this world? Why, then, this little defenceless child of hers would be left nameless and unfriended, with a doubt, a horrible slur, cast on his birth! Was she bound still to keep her word and to say nothing? Or could it be true that her husband was so utterly weary of her that he really never meant to return? Unhappy as her year of married life had been,

she was yet too loyal to credit such a thought as that. He had often left her for weeks at a time, but he had always returned. The haunting thought remained, however, that he might return now too late. Nor could she flatter herself that he would take very much trouble about his child. It was not John's way to burden himself—he left the burdens to other people.

‘Mappen they’ve never been weddit,’ her hostess had said. Other people would say the same, very likely, and the child would be the sufferer. What could she do for him?

In those days wedding rings were not all of one pattern; any ring served. She drew from her finger the one her husband had given her. It was a thick gold ring with a large sapphire set in it, and the posy engraved on the inner side was this:

In Christ and thee my comfort be.

A little tearless sob escaped her as she glanced at the words. ‘John’ had proved a sorry comforter, and had deserted her in her greatest need. She had excused him with a sort of patient dignity when Mary Wilson blamed him, but in her heart she knew that he had cruelly neglected the woman he had vowed to love and cherish.

‘I will fasten this round the child,’ she said to herself; ‘maybe it will speak for him when I am gone.’ And catching at a bit of green ribbon which hung from her travelling cloak, she tore it off with some difficulty, threaded the ring on it, and tied the ends securely under the child's clothes.

At this he woke and began to wail piteously, which brought Mary Wilson from the next room. She just glanced at the shadowy face on the pillow, and then called quickly to her neighbour to come and hold the infant.

‘The puir leddy is passin’ awa’,’ she said, lifting the child from its mother’s breast and giving it to her companion. ‘Tell me the gentleman’s name, dear,’ she pleaded, raising the dying girl’s head tenderly.

There was a slight gesture of refusal. The colourless lips closed firmly.

‘Tell me juist his name,’ urged Mary Wilson, ‘or your feyther’s name. Mappen the gentleman hath wronged thee, but——’

She broke off, astonished by the energy and strength which suddenly nerved the form she was supporting.

The dying girl sat bolt upright; a glow of colour rose in her pale face.

‘I call God to witness that he is my lawful husband,’ she cried, and without another word she fell back dead in Mary Wilson’s arms.

The sunset glow had faded and the night had set in when two travellers passed by the gloomy Watendlath tarn, upon which the moonlight made a broad, silvery track.

‘Ha!’ exclaimed the elder of the two, ‘the good folk at the farm are still astir; there’s a light in the window. What does that bode? I wish, Christopher, you would go on and ask how Lucy fares. You can say her husband hath sent for tidings. It would be as well that I should not show my face in Watendlath an it can be helped.’

‘What is the name of the farm people?’ asked Christopher Vane, a somewhat thick-set and heavy-featured lad who looked about eighteen, but was in reality younger.

‘Their name is Wilson. But the man himself is away at some fair. I will wait for you here. Already we have roused all the dogs of the place.’

Christopher Vane, not much liking his errand, but accustomed to obey this brilliant friend of his, who was

a courtier and a wit besides being fifteen years his senior, moved off in the direction of the little white farm and knocked at the door.

‘How fares it with the lady who came here for shelter two nights ago?’ he asked, when Mary Wilson appeared in answer to his summons.

‘Oh, sir, she has passed awa’ this verra night,’ replied the good woman. ‘Her laal barn—a son, sir—was born at cock-crow.’

Christopher Vane made a stifled ejaculation. ‘Wait a bit,’ he said; ‘I must speak a few words to my friend here.’

Mary Wilson saw him stride hastily down to the side of the little beck, which foamed and tumbled over its rocky bed not far from the house. He disappeared in the shadow of the trees, and after a few minutes a taller and older man came slowly forward into the moonlight. Looking sharply at the plumed hat and the general outline of the form, the mistress of the house had no difficulty in recognising the strange gentleman who had asked for shelter two nights since, but then, as now, his face had been half hidden.

‘Where is the child?’ he said, abruptly.

She led him into the kitchen, where, in a wooden cradle, lay the newborn infant.

‘Put one of the lady’s cloaks about it and give it to me,’ he said, with the merest glance at the little dark head nestled into the pillow.

Mary Wilson hesitated. ‘The night is cauld, sir,’ she ventured, ‘and a babe in swaddling clothes——’

‘Do as I tell you,’ he said, with a peremptory gesture, ‘and let me have a light here.’

He moved towards the inner room and Mary Wilson lit a candle, and would have carried it for him into the death chamber; but, taking it from her with a hand which trembled a little, he went in, shutting the door behind him.

In the presence of death a momentary sense of awe had quenched the courtier's mirth. His heartless schemes were for a while checked; tears stood in his eyes as he looked on the lovely, tranquil face of the girl he had loved for a few weeks and whose life he had wrecked.

'Poor Lucy!' he muttered. 'It would have been well for both of us if we had never met! And now here is this cursed brat to be disposed of! Why had he not the grace to die with you?'

He drew the sheet once more over the face of the dead girl, and, setting down the candle, paced to and fro with knitted brow.

'There is no help for it,' he said to himself at last. 'He stands in the way of all my schemes. And after all who will be the worse for it? That it goes against my stomach proves naught.'

He caught up the warm travelling cloak which Lucy had worn but a day or two ago, and strode back to the kitchen, where Mary Wilson held the sleeping child in her arms. The firelight flickered upon the rosy little face; how full of life it seemed after the marble face in the inner room! He shuddered and turned away, ostensibly to count out some money from his purse.

'I am obliged to you for all you have done,' he said, placing some gold pieces in the woman's hand.

'I want no payment, sir,' she replied, with quiet dignity. 'The puir leddy was welcome to a' the help I could gie her.'

'Then keep this for the burial,' he said quickly. 'I would stay to arrange things myself were it possible, but urgent and pressing business calls me away from this part of England. Give me the child.'

Between the thought of the burial of the poor lady, and what her husband would say to it all when he came back from the fair, and this sudden demand for the infant, Mary Wilson was so much agitated that words

failed her, nor did she venture on a second remonstrance when the gentleman took the sleeping child in his arms, flung a corner of his own short cloak over it, and, with a promptitude which fairly bewildered her, threw open the door and passed down the steps. When he had actually disappeared her faculties returned to her, and hastening out into the porch she called after him eagerly, 'Sir, sir, at least tell me your name!'

But there was no reply, nor could she even hear his footsteps. A passing cloud had hidden the moon; nothing was to be seen but the dark outline of the hills, nothing was to be heard save the familiar rushing of the little beck. But after a while, as she stood there straining her ears in the hope of hearing his steps, she caught the dreaded sound of the phantom hounds baying as they hunted the 'barfoot stag.' Then in deadly terror she closed and barred the door, and, crouching beside the kitchen fire, said the Lord's Prayer for comfort; for was it not well known that the 'barfoot stag,' the terror of that part of the country, always went through Watendlath tarn, and was chased over the fells down into Borrowdale?

In the meantime Christopher Vane had been rejoined by his companion, and the two men were making their way to Rosthwaite.

'It's well you know the path,' said Christopher, stumbling down the rough track. 'You seem to the manner born.'

'Well, that's not unnatural,' replied his friend. 'This part of the world was known to me as a boy, and one doesn't forget things learnt in youth.'

A muffled wail made Christopher start.

'Good lord! what's that?' he cried, in alarm.

'No banshee,' said his companion, with a laugh. 'Only this brat of mine has roused up, worse luck to him.'

‘You have brought the child away?’

‘Yes; it was the safest plan. The woman would never have kept him without asking a score of awkward questions, she was too shrewd for that.’

‘What shall you do with it?’ said Christopher.

‘Dispose of it somewhere in Borrowdale, the loneliest place in creation, and then ignore the fact that it ever existed. I know I can trust you to keep a still tongue. I have your oath.’

‘Yes, you have,’ said Christopher Vane, not daring to remonstrate with his friend, yet secretly uneasy about this night’s work. I suppose you’ll leave the babe with some of the dales-folk?’ he suggested, hesitatingly.

‘I have a scheme in my head,’ said the older man.

They had by this time reached the valley, and the speaker paused for a minute.

‘Do you recollect the way to Longthwaite?’ he asked; ‘over yonder and across the river.’

‘Yes,’ said Christopher; ‘I can find my way there if the moon keeps clear.’

‘Then you go on and bid them prepare us the best meal they can, with plenty of hot spiced ale, and in an hour or two, when light breaks, we will take horse and go over the Stake Pass.’

‘Where are you going now?’ said Christopher, uneasily.

‘Only to dispose safely of this brat. I’ll be with you anon; and mind! not a word as to the child. We’ll keep a golden silence.’

So saying, he turned sharply to the right, while Christopher Vane made his way slowly to Longthwaite Farm, where their horses were stabled.

For some time the infant had made no sound whatever; it had, in fact, been violently jogged to sleep as its father strode down the steep track from Watendlath. Once it crossed his mind that perhaps it had been stifled

beneath his cloak. He paused in a little clearing where the moonbeams pierced the trees, and looked at it. In the cold, pale light the tiny face was like marble. Surely the child was dead! He felt quite kindly towards it for having considerably relieved him from a piece of work very little to his taste. But even as he looked a smile flickered over the face of the sleeping child, and it stirred a tiny yet vigorous-looking fist.

With a muttered curse the father flung the cloak over it, and again strode on through lovely Borrowdale, with its stately trees and craggy mountains and its river gleaming like a silver thread in the moonlight.

‘I ought to have hired some ruffian to do my dirty work,’ he reflected. ‘Yet then there is always the risk of betrayal. After all, if I christen the imp first it will but translate him to Paradise. I’ll get down by the river as soon as may be. Old Father Francis once told me that lay baptism was valid, but I’ll warrant he never thought of the baptizer drowning the child the next minute.’

He laughed grimly, but there was, nevertheless, a sick feeling at his heart; he shivered. It seemed to him that the little unconscious babe was drawing out all his vital heat, it lay so warm and peacefully on his arm.

Waging an uncomfortable debate within himself, he strode on until he could see the outline of Castle Crag just across the river, while not far from him on the hillside to the right was the huge detached piece of rock known by the dales-folk as the Bowder Stone. He must go no further or, as he well knew, he should come within sight of the tiny hamlet of Grange.

The piece of work he so cordially detested must be done without any more delay. Quitting the rough mule track, he bent his steps to the left and climbed down to the riverside, depositing his burden on the grass, and removing Lucy’s mantle, which had been folded about

it. Rolling this into a tight bundle, he hid it in the hollow trunk of an old oak tree, and paused for a minute to remove from beneath his doublet a miniature which hung there.

‘I’d better throw this into the Derwent,’ he reflected, ‘or else bury it here. If Lucy’s successor were to come across it her jealousy would be up in arms, and she would get at the whole truth by hook or by crook.’

In the moonlight he glanced for the last time at the sweet, girlish face, and with a stifled sigh thrust the miniature under a flat stone beside the oak, to the great discomfiture of the ants beneath it. Then, lifting the sleeping child once more, he stepped down to the water’s edge.

‘What shall I name the imp?’ he thought. ‘It’s a matter of little moment. I will name him after the river which is to carry him to Paradise.’ And bending down he sprinkled the child’s brow, hastily muttering the words, ‘Derwent I baptize thee, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’

He had hoped not to rouse his little son, but at the first touch of the cold water the infant awoke; he could have sworn that it looked up at him with Lucy’s eyes—that the tiny face of the new-born babe was the face of the wife he had neglected. Something in its helplessness and innocence appealed to him strongly. He cursed his own weakness, but he could not, as he had intended, drown this little defenceless mortal.

‘There are things a gentleman cannot put his hand to,’ he said to himself, with a soothing sense of his innate refinement. ‘I cannot do it. I will only leave him here by the river.’

And without any more delay he put the child down on the wet grass at the foot of a silver birch tree, and turned to go, pluming himself on his forbearance.

Like so many, he failed to see that it is often more

cruel for a parent to desert a child than to murder it outright—that desertion is in fact, as a rule, only murder long drawn out. Without once looking back, he turned away to regain the mule track, when suddenly he paused, rooted to the spot by overmastering terror. What unearthly tumult was this which greeted him? On the mountain-side, above the Bowder Stone, there came the blood-curdling sound of that mysterious phantom hunt which he had heard of in his boyhood. The ‘barfoot stag’ had made its way through Watendlath tarn, and was now plunging down in its headlong course to Borrowdale. He could hear the awful baying of the phantom hounds and the rushing of many feet; nay, there came a moment when he could hear the panting of the stag close beside him. Then he could endure the mystery of it no longer, but fled to Rosthwaite, running the faster because a wailing, piteous voice rang in his ears, and he knew that the phantom hunt must be plunging into the Derwent at the very place where his baby son lay helpless and forlorn.

CHAPTER II

Now it chanced that the worthy owner of Isel Hall—one Sir Wilfrid Lawson—who had great possessions in Cumberland, and owned part of Borrowdale besides St. Herbert's Isle on Derwentwater, had come to spend a few weeks at his summer house on the island. He, waking early and seeing that the day bid fair to be still and cloudy—just such a day as Isaak Walton commends to anglers—ordered his gillie to make ready the boat, in which they rowed from St. Herbert's Isle, and the water being high after much rain, made their way up the river within sight of Grange Farm.

Having fastened the boat to an ash tree, Sir Wilfrid in his fishing boots strode along the bank in the direction of Castle Crag, and had just landed his first trout when Dickon, the gillie, came hurrying back with consternation in his sunburnt face. 'Sir,' he said, 'there's a strange cratur over yonder—an uncanny cratur, that makes a sound betwixt a lamb's bleat and the hootin' of an owl.'

Sir Wilfrid laughed.

'Go and bring me this strange thing,' he said.

But Dickon hesitated.

'Weel, sir, the cratur's uncanny; maybe it would bewitch us. I will fetch it, sir, if you order it—but—I've no liking for bogles.'

'Come, come,' said the knight. 'Who ever heard of bogles after sunrise? I'll go and see the monster myself. Where is it?'

Dickon, glad to be quit of the duty of fetching this strange thing, led the way a few hundred yards up the river and pointed across to the further bank, where, under a silver birch tree, was a white bundle which certainly justified his description.

Sir Wilfrid strode across from boulder to boulder, waded through the shallower part of the river, and stepped on to the further shore. His companion, made brave by his example, followed closely in his wake.

‘Why, God preserve us!’ exclaimed the knight. ‘’Tis a new-born babe, and some one must have deserted it hours ago, for the poor brat is half dead with cold lying in this heavy dew. Better have drowned it outright than have left it to suffer like this.’

Dickon, ashamed of his fears, ventured now to pick up the poor little mortal, whose wailing had chilled his blood.

‘This be no gipsy’s child, sir,’ he said. ‘See, its swaddlin’ clothes be fine and soft.’

The knight looked perplexed. Had they been near any high road he could have understood it; but a deserted child in Borrowdale, where travellers hardly ever ventured! This was a mystery indeed.

‘Well, we can scarce hope to track the parents,’ he said, ‘and anyhow we must first carry this poor little imp to some shelter. Perhaps Anne Fisher at Grange Farm would see to it. She has an infant of her own.’

‘Nay, sir; it died three days since, and I heard Agnes say that her mother was to nurse Mistress Radcliffe’s infant.’

‘Well, carry it to Grange and let us see what can be done,’ said Sir Wilfrid. ‘We shall have it dying if there’s much more delay. Of all cowardly deeds the most cowardly is to bring a child into the world and then to desert it. I wish I had the horsewhipping of its father!’

They tramped back to Grange, and the knight knocked at the door of the snug farmhouse and told the mistress of the discovery they had made. Anne Fisher's sad face brightened with a gleam of amusement as she glanced at awkward Dickon and the burden he was bearing.

'Why, Dickon!' she said, 'you hold the babe face down for all the world as if't were a pig. Give it to me. Bless it's heart, it is half-starved with the cauld.'

She took it in her motherly arms, and, sitting down by the kitchen fire, began to unfold the soft flannel and fine linen in which it was swathed.

'Why, here is a ring, sir, tied about it,' she exclaimed. 'It's clear this child belongs to gentlefolks. And noo I think o' it, Agnes did say that she saw two gentlemen, foreigners to Borrowdale, riding from Keswick at dusk yesterday.'

Sir Wilfrid looked at the ring, with its magnificent sapphire; then he read the posy and shrugged his shoulders. He felt convinced that he should never unravel the mystery, but being a practical and a most kindly man he determined to do all that could be done for the poor little waif whom he had rescued from a lingering and painful death.

'Look here, Anne,' he said. 'If you will tend this little imp for a while I will make myself responsible for all charges that you are put to. Before long this boy will be worth his salt. If he promises well I will have him educated, and if he is a dunce—why, at the worst he can be put to field work. Is that Mistress Radcliffe's babe? I hear there is great disappointment on Lord's Island that this posthumous child is a lassie.'

He bent down to glance at an infant which slept by the hearth in a wooden cradle.

'Yes, sir; old Sir Nicholas Radcliffe langed sair for a grandson. Mrs. Radcliffe has put the barn out to nurse

for a year,' said Anne Fisher. 'And it's glad I am to have her now that my own babe is taken. As for this little one, I'll do my best for him, sir; you may trust me.'

'Ay, I would trust you, Anne, sooner than any woman in the world,' said Sir Wilfrid, with a glance at the strong, quiet face, with its look of motherly patience and tenderness. 'I go back to Isel to-day, but by Michaelmas I shall be over again for the shooting, and will come and see how this little imp thrives.'

Bidding her good-day he left the farm, and Anne, having warmed and fed and washed her little charge, laid him in the cradle by the tiny descendant of the Derwentwaters, little dreaming that, while the one by her sex had failed to inherit the coveted property, the other had been disinherited and deserted by the cruel caprice of his own father.

Supremely indifferent to all this, however, the two little mortals lay cosily beside the hearth in the farmhouse kitchen, and Anne Fisher rocked the cradle and sang to comfort her own sad heart one of the old metrical psalms:

Unto the righteous doth arise
 In trouble joy, in darknesse light :
 Compassion is in his eyes,
 And mercy alwaies in his sight :
 Yea, pitie moveth such to lend,
 He doth by judgment things expend.

And surely such shall never faile,
 For in remembrance had is he,
 No tidings ill can make him quaile,
 Who in the Lord sure hope doth see.
 His heart is firm, his feare is past,
 For he shall see his foes down cast.

True to his word, Sir Wilfrid Lawson visited the farm again at Michaelmas, bringing with him this time his

wife. Beyond the fact that two strange gentlemen had rested their horses at Longthwaite Farm the night before the discovery of the child, nothing had transpired. Up at Watendlath they were busy with the harvest, and then Mary Wilson had been ill, and though her husband had certainly been down to Keswick Market he was a man who had a wonderful gift of silence, and when he did open his lips it was to discourse of crops and to grumble at the weather.

‘Has the child been baptized yet?’ asked Lady Lawson, who took very kindly to the pretty little unknown babe.

‘No, ma’am, but Mistress Radcliffe’s is to be christened at Crosthwaite Church to-morrow morn, and maybe I’d better take the little lad, too. What is he to be called, sir?’

‘Poor little imp, I doubt he has no surname,’ said the knight. ‘We had better call him after the river—it’s there we found him; as for his Christian name—since he is to be christened at Michaelmas—let him be called Michael, and you and I, my dear, will be sponsors.’

Lady Lawson assented, and held the little babe tenderly enough in her motherly arms the next day in Crosthwaite Church. At the last moment there was a hue and cry for a second godfather, the parish clerk sturdily refusing to add to his already large number of godchildren.

‘I’d do it for a parishioner,’ he said, ‘but at foreigners I draw the line; a parish clerk must draw the line somewhere.’

At that there stepped forward a curious-looking man, with an enormous forehead and a bush of flaxen hair. It was the Keswick fiddler—usually known as Sebastian Snoggles—though, as he was apt to inform the good Cumbrians, his name was not that at all, but Zinogle. His grandfather had been one of the miners who came

over from Germany in Queen Elizabeth's days to work the copper mines now closed, and 'Snoggles' was a popular person in all the country round because—although a 'Dutchman'—he played divinely on the fiddle.

'I'm ready to stand sponsor,' he said, with a twinkle in his blue eyes. 'I'm not one myself to draw the line at foreigners.'

And the little discussion being over, the ceremony proceeded, and Michael the foundling, and Audrey, the youngest member of the Keswick branch of the Derwentwaters, were enrolled in the Christian army.

CHAPTER III

Recollections of Michael Derwent; Begun in this month of August, Anno Domini 1687, at Christ's College, Cambridge.

A SEN'NIGHT since there came to me here at Cambridge a fellow who had lain at Isel Hall and had been charged with messages to me by Sir Wilfrid Lawson. Lady Lawson, who had always shown me great kindness, sent me sundry gifts welcome enough to a poor sizar who likes very ill to go shabby about the world, and in the parcel, to my great content, was enclosed another smaller packet directed in Audrey Radcliffe's irregular writing and indifferent spelling. As I hastily unfolded the paper I saw two pair of most well-knit socks, with sprigs of lavender laid between them; and with the smell there seemed to rise before me a vision of the pleasance on Lord's Island, and of my playmate and foster-sister, and the world felt to me a better place, just because she was in it, and because she took thought for me and my needs.

A student left alone at Cambridge in the Long Vacation is apt to mope like an owl by day, and in the drowsy, enervating heat of the summer noon I found myself consumed with longing for the old days at Borrowdale, climbing once more in imagination Scafell and Great Gable, and roaming with Audrey along the shores of Derwentwater. To wake from those dreams of the past to the deathly quiet of Cambridge in August was dreary enough; to trudge alone over that desolate, flat country

only made me more homesick for the mountains of my own north country, while to look out into the grey quad of Christ's, where not a single man was left to bear me company, made me at times well-nigh desperate.

One day, when thoughts of Audrey had haunted me more incessantly than ever, it came into my head that I would write down some of the recollections of our childhood, and no sooner had I taken pen and paper in hand than I found a sort of companionship in the notion, and what with writing and remembering and living over again the old days I passed the time indifferent well.

My earliest recollection is a strange one. It is of the landing-place at Lowdore, not far from the mill. Old Zinogle was beside me with his fiddle, and we stood watching a boat and measuring with our eyes the swiftly-increasing space between it and the bank. Some of the Lord's Island servants were in the boat, and beside them sat Audrey, a plump, jolly little child of three, much excited at the long-deferred home-going, and chatting fast to her companions, yet ever and anon turning to wave farewells to me. I can remember now the horrid way in which the boat dwindled and dwindled till it was a mere speck in the distance, and then I flung myself down upon the grass and sobbed, for Borrowdale felt as desolate as a wilderness.

Zinogle and the miller talked together; the old fiddler said it was cruel to part us when we were just like sweet-hearts. I had no idea what the word meant, but his tone was sympathetic and comforting.

The miller, on the other hand, argued that it was not to be expected that Mrs. Radcliffe would let her daughter be any longer with a brat that had neither father nor mother, but had just been picked up under a bush.

He had a slow, drawling voice, and his words made a deep impression on me. When he was gone I asked my old friend the fiddler a question.

‘Snoggles,’ I said, hiding my wet face on his shaggy beard, ‘was it wrong of me to be picked up under a bush?’

‘Why, no, my laddie,’ he said, gathering me up in his strong arms, and laughing. ‘But very wrong of them that left ye there; and when ye grow to be a man, laddie, I should set off like Jack in the fairy tale and find them that did ye that wrong. I hope to God ye’ll hae your rights yet. Often enoo ’t is the grey dawn that brings the fine day. So don’t forget to hope, laddie. Hope maun be your guiding star through life.’

Luckily for me, Lord’s Island did not suit Audrey well, or perhaps she pined for companionship. At any rate, it happened that she was constantly being sent back to Grange Farm; so that practically we grew up together, belonging to each other from the very first. As for Anne Fisher, she was as happy as I was when Audrey returned, and I overheard her once saying to the servant who had come from the island that the children did each other a ‘mort o’ good,’ that the boy made the girl brave, and the girl made the boy gentle. There was certainly truth in the last notion, for nobody could have been rough with one like Audrey; and though she was as brave as any one could have desired, she was none of your stuck-up, independent lasses, but from the first loved to have a stronger hand to help her in climbing as we roamed about the hills and scrambled about the crags.

In those days I think we learned to know every inch of the fells. We would play at Cavaliers and Round-heads by the hour together, and many were the hiding-places in which distressed fugitives found shelter from imaginary pursuers. There was what we called the Steeple Rock on Grange Fell, where actually in sight of the farm we could hide in a narrow little cleft; and there was the wood in what we called the Happy Valley,

a tiny, unfrequented gully among the hills, where beneath an old yew tree was a sheltered recess, which we considered our most secure retreat. But, perhaps, our favourite expedition was a long scramble up to high Lowdore, where in a V-shaped opening between Shepherd's Crag and Gowder Crag one could catch a lovely glimpse of Skiddaw and of Derwentwater, with its islands like little green dots on a silver shield. I remember there was a hiding-place not far from here in the woods betwixt Lowdore and Ashness Farm. We called it the quarry, and often made our hunted patriots take shelter there. But to no one did we ever reveal these secrets, but treasured them up as possessions of our very own, fully believing that some day we might need them ourselves. And what would be the good of a secret hiding-place if all Borrowdale knew of it?

In the evenings Anne would sometimes be persuaded into telling us of the Borrowdale bogle. She had not seen it herself, but her daughter Agnes had seen it and would never speak to us on the subject, looking scared if the very word bogle was spoken in her presence.

This ghost was a far-away kinsman of Audrey's—a Radcliffe, but which of the many branches I never clearly understood.

The story ran that when in the time of the Civil War St. Herbert's Isle had been garrisoned for the Parliament, some wag thought to amuse himself at the expense of one of the Royalist defenders of Carlisle Castle, Robert Phillipson, and persuaded him that the custodian of St. Herbert's Island was a traitor and would yield up his valuable store of ammunition. Accordingly Anne told us that Mr. Phillipson sallied forth one night from Carlisle, cut his way through the lines besieging the castle, and with a strong party of men rode up to Cat Bells. But then he found that it was all a hoax; every boat was drawn up upon the island, and when he

summoned the St. Herbert's garrison to surrender he was only greeted with shouts of derisive laughter. He had had a useless ride of sixty miles! Afterwards he went to Keswick, where his men refreshed themselves, while he in great dudgeon visited Sir Edward Radcliffe on Lord's Island and told him and the garrison there of the way in which the Parliamentarians had hoaxed him. It chanced that one of the many Radcliffe cousins, named James, was present, and he vowed that he would be revenged on the perpetrators of the joke. A few days later a young officer from St. Herbert's Isle was returning from a day's shooting, and as he strode along, his servant following with the birds, who should appear from among the trees near their boat but James Radcliffe. With many bitter words he challenged the officer, and a duel was fought by the water's side, and in this way James Radcliffe met with his death, and ever since his ghost has haunted the neighbourhood, being seen by many both in Grange and Borrowdale, and on the fells and in the woods round Derwentwater, whence it happens that nobody cares to go out after dark, since to meet a ghost is enough to make even a brave man recoil.

It was well enough to hear Anne tell the tale as we sat by the hearth near the glowing logs, but it was not so pleasant when we had to go up to bed in the dark rooms above, and to pass the great carved oak chest in the passage, in which it seemed always so likely that ghosts would hide! Audrey used to pant like a hunted stag as we ran up the stairs hand in hand, but though I was scared, too, I am sure I would have bucklered her against a thousand bogles, for there was nothing that heartened me so much as to feel her grip tight hold of my hand as though she had faith in my strength.

I must have been about ten years old when I first went, at Sir Wilfrid Lawson's request, to keep Christmas at Isel Hall; my patron wished to see what progress I

had made since I had been a scholar at the Keswick High School, and Zinogle, who was needed to play his fiddle at a dance, took me over with him. By the time we reached Cockermouth we were very weary, and glad enough to dine at one of the inns in the little town.

Afterwards Zinogle dropped asleep over his pipe, while I, eager to be off once more, strolled out to the open door, and stood watching the busy throng of people in the street. All at once there rose in the distance a most curious noise; every moment it grew louder. It seemed to me the most awful sound I had ever heard, and for a moment I shook in my shoes, thinking that the day of judgment had come, and that all the fiends in hell were hastening to seize and drag down their victims to perdition. It comforted me greatly to see that the landlord, in spite of his fiery nose and shaking hands and the other tokens he gave of being a drunkard, did not manifest the least alarm; clearly it could not be the Last Day.

‘Is it a wild beast show?’ I asked, cheering up. ‘Are those lions and bears roaring?’ for I had heard Zinogle describe how he once met a travelling show, and had always longed to come across one. The landlord laughed till the tears ran down his bloated face. ‘Beasts roaring!’ he said. ‘Why, no, laddie; those be the worthy inhabitants of this town hounding down the pestilent knaves called Quakers.’

I was greatly disappointed. To have seen lions and bears would have been an event worth living for; but who cared to see these eccentric preachers? Why, even so kind-hearted a man as Sir Wilfrid called them a most dangerous sect. I had heard him say as much once when he was in Keswick. Still, there was comfort in knowing that it was not the Last Day.

And now the shouting and jeering and groaning grew louder and louder, and a great crowd came into sight.

I scrambled up on to a window-sill to see the better, and was much surprised to find that these dangerous folk were nought but some peaceable-looking men and women, and my blood began to boil to see them so defenceless in the midst of the rude, bawling throng.

Though they were pushed and goaded and driven like beasts amid blows and curses, they made no show whatever of resistance. Even the women, when their hoods and scarves were torn off them by the rabble, showed never a sign of anger, but went calmly on, for this, I learnt afterwards, was part of their creed.

I doubt if there is any feeling more deeply rooted in the hearts of most English folk than the instinct that makes us rush to the help of the ill-used and weak. The Quakers suffered chiefly because a wave of panic was sweeping through the land, and men became cruel because they feared; but they were also unpopular because they spoke plainly against many vested interests. Our landlord, for instance, was one of the foremost in throwing mud and stones at them. But when I caught sight of a brutal fellow striding along, repeatedly striking with his stick the bald head of one of the Quakers until the blood streamed down, a sort of fiery strength suddenly possessed me. From the vantage-ground of the window-sill I snatched at the stick, wrenched it out of the fellow's hand, and dropped it down the grating beneath the window.

The face of the Quaker lit up for a moment with an expression which I can never forget, but the next instant the owner of the stick had caught me by the hair of the head, and with oaths and blows had flung me with all his force on to the doorstep of the inn. 'After all, it is my last day,' I thought in the curious moment of reflection for which there always seems time during a fall. Then came a crash, and I knew no more till I woke up on Zinogle's knee.

‘Are you better, sonny?’ he asked, kindly, and I sat up, but turned deadly sick, and was glad to fall back once more on the old fiddler’s breast.

‘You’re a blessed young fool to help scum like that,’ said the landlord, contemptuously—‘folks as won’t take their Bible oath as all decent Christians do.’

‘What has become of the man with the bald head?’ I asked.

‘Well, I reckon you saved him from many a blow of Bully Barton’s stick,’ said Zinogle, in his comforting voice. ‘And, strangely enough, he be a Radcliffe. There be Catholic Radcliffes an’ Church of England Radcliffes, and now there be this Quaker Radcliffe. And I will say for them that they all know how to suffer for their faith, and that’s more’n can be said for some folk.’

It was now high time to go on our way, and having washed my face and hands at the pump in the backyard, and sleeked down my wet hair over my forehead so that the worst of the bruises was hidden, I set off with Zinogle, feeling very shaky about the knees.

‘I whope you’ve learnt your lesson,’ said the landlord in a patronising tone; ‘you’ll hae mony a sair head, I’m thinking, if ye go about the world interfering with the course of justice.’

‘But it was not justice,’ I thought to myself, and trudged on doggedly, hardly daring to think how many miles still lay betwixt us and Isel Hall.

We had only just gained the outskirts of the town when we were hailed by a farmer who was driving home from market. He had a broad, honest, cheerful face that made me think of a withered but still rosy apple.

‘Why, Snoggles!’ he cried, heartily, ‘so you’re shepherding the laddie that snatched Bully Barton’s stick from him. Art going to Isel, man?’

‘Ay,’ said Zinogle, ‘if Bully Barton has left breath enough in this little imp’s body.’

‘I’ll gie ye a lift,’ said the farmer; ‘put the laddie up betwixt us. But,’ with a sly wink at me, ‘ye mustna be takin’ awa my whip if I touch up Brown Bess now and agin.’

I shall never forget the relief of that unexpected ending to our journey. Dear old Snoggles threw his arm about me, and Farmer Birkett wrapped me in a horse-cloth, and in two minutes, what with the gathering gloom and the cold air and the monotonous jogging of the cart, I was sound asleep. By the time we reached Isel the moon was shining, and I can dimly remember my first sleepy view of that grand old mansion, with its battlemented walls and its pele tower. I wished we could have driven on in the cart for ever. However, Farmer Birkett patted me on the shoulder and wished me good-night and good luck, and Zinogle led me into the house, where we were taken to a large room with curious panelling round the walls and a blazing fire of logs, beside which sat my patron and his lady.

‘Why, heaven help us! what has befallen the child?’ cried my Lady Lawson.

Whereupon Zinogle gave a graphic account of what had passed at Cockermouth, and I stood by trembling, for I well knew that Sir Wilfrid detested the Quakers.

‘Come here, boy,’ he said when Zinogle paused, and I stepped swiftly up to him, much as one steps towards the schoolmaster for a stroke of the cane, caring only to get it over quickly and not to flinch. He lifted his hand and raised the hair from my forehead as gently as a woman could have done it; there was a kindly twinkle in his bright eyes.

‘So thou couldst not brook seeing Bully Barton beat a Quaker,’ he said, ‘and did snatch his stick from him.’ At that he laughed right out, for as I learnt afterwards

this Barton was a notorious character and much addicted to prize-fighting, so that it seemed mere midsummer madness for a child of ten years to provoke him.

‘The Quaker did not strike back again, sir,’ I pleaded in excuse, ‘and somebody had to try and help him, else he might have been killed.’

‘I am not blaming you,’ said Sir Wilfrid. ‘Nay, I like you the better for it. Nevertheless your friend with the bald head will have to stay in prison, and I shall do my utmost to put down this sect, for I consider that it is a danger to the State. There, go get your supper, and good-night to you. If you mean to champion every ill-used mortal you come across you’ll not find this world a bed of roses.’

It must have been soon after my return from this visit that one afternoon Mrs. Radcliffe invited a few children from the neighbourhood to play with her daughter. There were two or three of the Radcliffe kinsfolk and the Brownriggs of Millbeck Hall, and after thawing our shyness with ‘Hoodman Blind’ some one proposed a game of ‘All Hid.’ It fell about that Audrey and I were to hide together, and as we were searching about for a good place in the little room above the porch we looked into a large old chest which stood against the wall.

‘Let us get in here,’ I suggested. ‘Why, how the thing smells! It is just as though a candle had been blown out in it.’

Audrey scrambled in, but her attention was at once drawn to an iron ring let into the floor of the chest. She showed it to me, and we wondered that we had never noticed it before.

‘What can be the good of it?’ I said, and, bending down, began to tug at the ring, for no special reason, but just from curiosity.

‘Why, a bit of the floor lifts up!’ cried Audrey, and

then, as with much exertion I raised the square piece of wood to which the ring was fastened, we both started back with exclamations of horror, for just below, quite clearly to be seen, was the head of a bald old man.

‘It’s a robber!’ cried Audrey, turning as white as a sheet and gripping hold of my arm; as for me, I was dumb with dismay, but seeing the terror in the face of this unexpected visitor, my courage began to return.

‘For God’s sake,’ he cried, ‘do not raise an alarm. Sir Nicholas knows I am here in the secret hiding-place. He himself put me here, and if another soul learns of it my life will be in danger.’

‘Are you a Quaker?’ I asked, thinking of my Cockermouth friend, and with some foolish connection in my mind betwixt bald heads and persecuted devotees.

He smiled involuntarily at the question.

‘Nay, I am a Catholic priest, and in telling you the truth I put my life in your hands, for they hunt us as though we were wild beasts. I beg you to speak of this to no one but to Sir Nicholas.’

We both solemnly promised to keep his secret, and then shut him down once more in the hiding-place which, till that day, had been utterly unknown to any one in the house save to Sir Nicholas and to one of the old servants. Then we prudently chose another room for our hiding-place in the game, but took scant interest in it, and were quickly discovered.

‘What a stupid place!’ said Henry Brownrigg, a boy some years my senior, who played with us in an ungracious and patronising fashion. ‘You were so long gone, too, that you might have done better than just creep behind curtains. Hide with me, Audrey, and you will see it will go much better. Are there no sliding panels in this house? I expect you have two or three priests’ holes, as they call them. Come now, haven’t you?’

Audrey had turned crimson; in another minute she would have cried.

‘It is not a good house for All Hid,’ I said, quickly. ‘Let us come to the garret and dress up in the put-away clothes there; when the lamps are lighted we’ll play the mummers in the hall.’

This idea was popular with everybody, and we skurried upstairs like rabbits, Audrey giving me a grateful little nod of acknowledgment for having tided her over her difficulty.

We heard no more of the hunted priest; but not very long after another Catholic friend of Sir Nicholas Radcliffe’s became a permanent member of the Lord’s Island household.

This was Mr. Noel, a gentleman who helped Sir Nicholas in the management of his estate, and acted as tutor, first to Audrey, and eventually to me also. I think in our hearts we children knew from the first that he was a priest in disguise. The persecution of the Catholics was very bitter just then owing to the revelations of Dr. Titus Oates; and Mrs. Radcliffe, who belonged to the Church of England, told us that Sir Nicholas himself might have run some danger of imprisonment had he not lived so peaceful and inoffensive a life. In truth he was too much of an invalid to leave the island, and no one could suspect him of having any part in the Popish plot which was the talk of the land.

And here I should like to say that however much Mr. Noel’s opinions may have been wrong, his presence at Lord’s Island was a capital thing for all of us. He was an excellent teacher, and I always found him a most kind friend; he, too, like dear old Zinogle, always urged me to work and to hope, and though, for aught I can see, nothing lies before me but to become secretary to Sir Wilfrid Lawson, I still buoy myself up with the

hope of one day finding that I have an honest name of my own, and kith and kin to care what befalls me.

Nothing can be foreseen with certainty in these strange times; and whereas in our childhood the Papists were glad to hide from the fury of the storm, now they are become most deadly tyrants, and His Majesty is trying to force the Fellows of Magdalene at Oxford to violate their statutes and their oaths, and men say he intends to turn the college into a Popish seminary. Law being thus wholly set aside, no clergyman throughout the land feels secure in his benefice, it being well known that King James abhors the English Church, and in ejecting the clergy would not even grant that third part of the income which the Puritans granted them when they were ejected in the Civil War.

However, I have yet another year at Cambridge, and much may happen in this changeful world before I again see Borrowdale and my friends on Lord's Island.

CHAPTER IV

THE passing years produced wonderfully little change in Zinogle the fiddler. He had never looked young, and now at sixty he did not look old. His flaxen hair might have had a grey thread or two, perhaps, and his face was more deeply lined, but otherwise he looked much as he had done that Michaelmas day in Crowthwaite Church, as, twenty years later, he wandered along the wooded shore of Lord's Island. His fiddle was tucked under his arm, and his keen blue eyes, with their irresistible humour, their twinkling merriment, took little heed of the lovely view to the west, where the autumn sunset was already mellowing the sky and throwing a gleam of glory over the mountains.

Zinogle was not thinking of sunsets, he was thinking how amusing the world can be to a spectator, the little passing world of men, with their strange makeshifts, their subtle plans, their mixed motives. 'Potttausend! —'tis a queer world, a most queer, topsy-turvy world!' he cried, laughing at his thoughts. 'I fiddle to-night for old Sir Nicholas Radcliffe, the Papist, who this year is in the ascendant, though he had to lie low when the plot was the talk of the land. And now it's Sir John Lowther who is shaking in his shoes, and praying night and morning for a Protestant wind to save him from the scaffold he sees in the future. A mad world, my masters—a most mad world! Ha! here comes pretty Mistress Audrey, who, methinks, cares little for the wrangling between parties in the State, but loves her

Papist grandfather and her Protestant mother alike, and expects them to agree in heaven, but not before, like a sensible lass.'

'What! Zinogle!' cried a clear, fresh voice close by.

And the next moment a young girl, dressed in white and wearing a wreath of mountain-ash berries and bracken in her nut-brown hair, stepped out from among the trees and eagerly greeted the fiddler. 'Have you seen Michael? Has he come?' she asked, eagerly.

'Ay, ay,' said the old German. 'He rode over from Isel Hall yesterday, and will be here anon. Quite a man he's grown since last he was here. Not that he's so tall, neither, as one might expect. I reckon he has had to rough it at Cambridge, where, according to him, sizars don't have an easy time. But though he's but a stripling there's just the old spirit that made him ever the foremost to be after the eagles on Glaramara.'

'Ah, yes, to be sure,' said Audrey, gaily. 'How well I remember seeing him lowered over the crags by a rope, and how Anne Fisher and I could hear our hearts thumping as we watched him. We were very happy as children together in Borrowdale! I wish the dear old times would return again.'

'Why, Mistress Audrey, that's for an old man like me to say, not for a young maid with the best of life before her.'

He looked meditatively at the sweet, thoughtful face, with its delicate outline and fair colouring, its great wistful grey eyes shaded by black lashes, and the rich brown curls touched with a golden glory where the sun glinted on them.

'Now, Zinogle, how stupid you are,' she said, laughing. 'It's exactly because all my life is before me, and because things are perplexing and the future uncertain, that I want the old times back. When we were children together we were as happy as the day is long. What did

we know of factions and disputes? What did money signify, or rank, or creed? As to the future, it troubled us not at all. We never thought about it, but enjoyed every day as it came.'

'And why not now?' asked Zinogle, thrumming his strings.

'Why not?' she asked, hesitatingly. 'Why, because things happen so contrarily, and thoughts will come troubling, whether we want them or not.'

For answer Zinogle drew his bow across the strings, and to a fantastic accompaniment, and in the most mirth-provoking fashion, sang a verse of 'Begone, dull care.'

Merely to look at his face as he sang was irresistible, and Audrey's laughter rang through the wood.

'If I only had you always at hand, Zinogle, I should never be in the dumps,' she said, merrily.

'Maybe,' said Zinogle, hugely pleased with her compliment; 'but there is always an "if only" with all of us. If only I could have a good tankard of home-brewed now I could have sung that more musically.'

'Then go to the house and get it,' said Audrey, blithely. 'But come back again; don't forget to come back.'

'What a funny old fellow he is!' she said to herself. 'He is quite right, I ought to be happy enough to-day; here's my foster-brother come back after his long absence, and to-night there will be the tenants' merry-making in the hall, and all the Hallowe'en sports, and Henry Brownrigg and his sister coming to see the fun. I'm afraid Michael will not be over-glad to see them, for in old days he never did like the Brownriggs; they never seem to forget that he is a foundling, though, after all, it's no shame to him. Michael was always too ready to mind being laughed at. He seemed to feel a sneer as other people feel a blow. Ah! there's a boat

coming across from St. Herbert's Isle! Michael must be coming!'

She started up from the log on which she had been resting, and ran down to the water's edge, her face lighting up radiantly as she recognised her old playmate.

'Michael!' she cried, in her clear voice, fearful lest he should go to the chief landing-stage. The rower glanced round, waved his hat in greeting, and hastily put in to the little creek on the island close to which she was standing.

'Zinogle told me you were here,' she said, as he sprang on shore and caught her hand in his. 'He told me of you and he told me of the periwig. It is well I was forewarned, or I should have been afraid of so fine a gentleman. Welcome to Lord's Island, sir,' and she swept him a mocking curtsy, to which he responded by a profound bow.

'Madam, your humble servant,' he said, with a smile which quite disguised his secret nervousness.

The most noticeable thing about him were his eyes, which were extraordinarily bright, and of that golden colour which makes one think of sunlight on a mountain stream. For the rest his well-cut features and rather short face seemed to be of the Welsh type, and though wiry and athletic, he was neither tall nor particularly strong-looking, but had a resolute expression bespeaking great powers of endurance.

'After all, save for the periwig, I don't think you are much altered,' said Audrey, gaily, 'and you have grown monstrous silent. There's a great change there; has Cambridge cultivated your brain at the expense of your tongue?'

'In the words of the riddle it's only tongue and brains that make the best dish for conversation,' he replied, with a laugh. 'Cambridge is not to be blamed, but rather the spell of this place and the change in you.'

‘What!’ she cried, with a roguish little glance, ‘have I turned into a Gorgon during your absence, and do I now freeze you into silence? In what, pray, am I changed?’

‘You are a thousand times more beautiful,’ he said, in a voice so low and reverent that it seemed like an act of worship. But Audrey failed to catch its significance; he was to her nothing but her old comrade, and people are seldom very observant under those circumstances.

‘They teach you to make compliments at Cambridge,’ she said, laughing—‘a very dangerous practice, let me tell you, sir, and not to be tolerated from a foster-brother. We two, at any rate, will speak the truth together. Come!’—she slipped her hand into his as she would have done years ago—‘let us sit down here for a while and chat; there are many things I want to hear and to tell.’

Michael had winced involuntarily at the word brother; he could hardly tell whether it was pleasure or torture to him to feel her hand resting so carelessly in his; but they walked together to the fallen tree, and there sat talking in friendly fashion.

‘And so your Cambridge days are over,’ she said. ‘And Zinogle tells me you found the life of a sizar a rough one.’

‘It was what my life is like to prove from beginning to end,’ he said. ‘One of uncertain position, one which must be always looked down on and held in contempt. As for the menial part of the work that fell to me, I cared nothing about that. It was honest labour, and there was no disgrace in it; but the thing which galled one was the contempt of other men whose lot chanced to be happier.’

Audrey’s face had grown thoughtful and tender. Her thoughts flew back to a time when Michael had been a daily scholar at the Keswick High School, founded in

the days of the Tudors, and she remembered how Zinogle the fiddler had once brought him to Lord's Island, more dead than alive, after fighting Henry Brownrigg, a boy nearly twice his size.

'Why did you fight him?' her mother had asked as she bathed his face.

'He called me base-born,' replied Michael, with an indignation which had made a deep impression on his little foster-sister. And from that day forward there had always been a sort of feud between Michael and his antagonist, though of late years they had seen nothing of each other.

'I suppose Anne Fisher really knows no more than what she always told us as children?' said Audrey.

'No, I questioned her only yesterday, and Sir Wilfrid and Dickon, the gillie, did their utmost to trace things out at the time, but failed.'

'Then why trouble any more about it?' said Audrey; 'after all, what does it matter? "What's in a name?" as the bard of Avon sings.'

'All the difference betwixt honour and dishonour at times,' said Michael, with a sigh. 'This ring——' he took off the sapphire ring he was wearing and glanced at the posy inscribed on it; 'this ring may be clear proof to my own mind that my mother was wedded, but it is no legal proof whatever.'

'For my part,' said Audrey, holding out her hand for the ring and looking at it attentively, 'I could weave a whole romance out of this. They were good and God-fearing people, your parents, else wherefore this motto, and some treacherous servant, out of spite, made away with you on the death of your mother; your father was away from home, and either believed that you had died at your birth or else learnt something of the truth and still searches all England for you. Then the wicked nurse who had hoped to get him into her power and to

step into the place of her late mistress, and win the estate for her children, pined away and came to a miserable end, as the covetors of land and money always do. Did you never hear the tale of my great-aunt Isabella?’

‘Who was she?’

‘I never saw her, she died six years ago, and had long been bedridden. You must have heard of my great-uncle Radcliffe, a younger brother of my grandfather’s. Well, the story goes, no sooner was I born and great-uncle Radcliffe became heir to the estate—not this island, which belongs, of course, to the Radcliffes of Dilston, but heir to Goldrill, near Ulleswater, this fair Lady Isabella, who for some reason had ever coveted the estate, straightway consented to wed my great-uncle; and there was born to them a most lovely child, a son, who was the delight of both father and mother. When this child was but three years old he fell into the beck which runs past the house, and his mother saw his peril and tried to save him but could not; and the terrible sight of his death wholly shattered her health, poor lady.’

‘Have you ever seen your great-uncle?’

‘I have no remembrance of him,’ said Audrey. ‘After the death of his son he lived in London, and at the time of the so-called Popish plot he was for long in prison and in peril of his life, although he was innocent enough, like many others in those times who fell victims to that false-tongued Dr. Titus Oates.’

‘Have a care,’ said Michael; ‘it is not always safe to denounce Dr. Oates even yet. There are some that would take you for a Papist an you spoke like that. Here comes Zinogle. Any news to-day in Keswick, Zinogle?’

‘Why yes, sir, there has come news that the Prince of Orange set sail last week, but after two days at sea

was driven back by reason of a great tempest. And they do say that Sir John Lowther is in the dumps, and prays night and day for a Protestant wind.'

'Tis like enough,' said Michael. 'For if the Prince does not come to deliver us from the king's tyranny he will pay dearly for his expedition the other night.'

'Is it, then, really true that Sir John armed his tenants?' asked Audrey. 'My mother heard some rumour of it, but in our divided household we seldom learn the truth of things.'

'Tell it not in Gath, but I was in the expedition myself,' said Michael, his face lighting up. 'By great good fortune Sir Wilfrid had sent me over to Sir John Lowther's with important papers for his perusal. And it so chanced that Andrew Huddleston, of Hutton John, brought word to the Lowthers that a ship would arrive at Workington laden with arms and ammunition for the popish garrison at Carlisle. Then there was such a mustering of the tenants as it would have done your heart good to see, and we were marched by night to the coast, and forced the vessel to surrender. That was the first act of the drama, but the second act does not prosper so well. Of course, the Prince of Orange should have been here by now, but thanks to contrary winds he is yet in Holland.'

'I care not whether he comes or no, so that they do not molest my grandfather,' said Audrey.

'No one would molest him,' said Michael, warmly. 'They say, moreover, that the Prince of Orange is tolerant and just, and a Papist who lives in peace with his neighbours, and seeks not to meddle with the liberties of Englishmen, is not likely to be in any peril.'

'Perhaps not, yet I would that Dr. Oates were safely out of the way,' said Audrey. Then, as Zinogle wandered away playing his favourite air, *Lady Frances Nevill's Delight*, she said, lowering her voice, 'Can you ever

forget that poor old priest we suddenly came upon in the secret hiding-place?'

'No,' said Michael. 'What awful terror there was in his face when we suddenly unearthed him in our game of All Hid. It was well for him we were the children, and not any of the Brownrigg clan; they would certainly have betrayed him, and brought trouble on your grandfather, and perhaps death to the refugee.'

'It was well that he let us tell my grandfather, otherwise I could never have borne it,' said Audrey. 'And do you know, Michael, I believe it was your courage and your silence that day that first made my grandfather take so kindly to you. He always speaks of you with respect.'

'I wonder what became of the priest?' said Michael.

'I asked my grandfather not long since. He said that he escaped the following day, and went over to Ireland, and then, I think, to France. He is alive now, but where I don't know. What should you do in a like case now that you are a man? Should you harbour a Papist?'

'That would depend on the sort of man he proved to be. Such an one as Sir Nicholas Radcliffe I would most certainly shield and protect had I the chance, but for the lying scoundrels who would bring free Englishmen under the thralldom of Rome, why I would not lift a finger to help them. As for Sir Nicholas, he is one of the best men living, and differences of creed come not to one's mind when speaking with him.'

'There is the bell ringing to summon us to the merry-making,' said Audrey, springing up from the fallen tree. 'Now let us forget all cares, and only remember that it is Allhallows e'en.'

CHAPTER V

Recollections of Michael Derwent; Written in the month of November, 1688, at St. Herbert's Isle, Derwentwater.

WHEN, after my long absence at Cambridge, I once more saw Audrey Radcliffe, she bade me to a merry-making and said that we were to forget all cares, it being Hallowe'en. Her face had been a trifle grave a moment before, our talk having turned upon religious differences, which ever bring some sadness into the happiest of homes; but it lit up as she spoke with its old look of radiant, childlike happiness. Never, surely, was there a more winsome face than hers, with its frank, sweet look, its freedom from all that was artificial. One would as soon have expected the noble beech trees in the pleasance to lend themselves to the grotesque figures into which gardeners hack box bushes, as have expected Audrey to abandon her free, natural manner for the cat-and-mouse tactics which most women adopt. To talk with her was like talking with a boy, so free was she from any trying after effect, only all the time one was conscious of a sweet, subtle difference, and knew that she was just a pure-minded woman who had grown up among the hills and dales of the dear old North-country, and was as yet heart-whole as a child.

We walked slowly towards the old house, a fifteenth-century mansion built of rough-hewn stone, but now, since the stormy times of the great Civil War, sadly

falling into decay. Sir Wilfrid Lawson has often told me what stirring times they had then, even in this quiet part of the world, for Lord's Island was garrisoned for the King by old Sir Edward Radcliffe, while St. Herbert's Isle—the Lawson property—was garrisoned, of course, for the Parliament. Naturally Lord's Island came off the worst, and the large private chapel, which, to judge by the fragments remaining, must have been a fine building, was unroofed, leaving little standing but the eastern wall and its pointed window, with ivy and creepers now festooning the broken tracery. The dining-room, moreover, which adjoined it, was half demolished, so that there only remained on the ground floor three rooms for the family use.

Sir Francis Radcliffe, the present head of the Derwentwater family, lived wholly on his great property at Dilston, in Northumberland, and they say that it was only to humour a fancy of his kinsman, old Sir Nicholas, that he permitted this younger branch of the Derwentwaters to reside in the old house. In his heart of hearts Sir Nicholas believes that the Lord's Island property should really have been his, he being the descendant of Nicholas Radcliffe, gentleman, of Keswick, fourth son of Sir Thomas Radcliffe, who built the house. It seems there was a family arrangement made by which the first son was disinherited, and was only to be allowed occupation by sufferance during his life, after which the estate was to pass to the other sons and their descendants. However, when the time came for this extraordinary arrangement to be carried out, the son of the disinherited heir was allowed to succeed, and, being a man of much force of character, he made for himself a good position and devised the estate at his death. This story of the far past still rankles, nevertheless, in the mind of old Sir Nicholas, who spends much of his time in poring over musty old deeds and trying to prove to

the satisfaction of the lawyers that he should really be owner of Lord's Island instead of merely the occupant of this half-dismantled house.

Audrey led me through the withdrawing-room into the great hall, where the tenants were already gathering in answer to the big bell which clanged overhead in the tower. Standing to welcome them was old Sir Nicholas in his mulberry-coloured coat. He was not in the least altered; indeed, he appeared to me, if anything, younger, for, as a boy, I had always thought of him as a very aged man. Now there seemed to me, after all, to be much vitality in the gentle old face, though he had already reached his three-score years and ten. His mild blue eyes had always to me the look of some mediæval saint, and they glanced at me very kindly when he spoke and bade me welcome to Lord's Island. It was in Audrey's mother that I noticed more plainly the havoc that time had wrought. She had never been strong, and now her hair was quite grey, while there were lines that told of pain and anxiety about her mouth. One does not think much about one's elders in childhood, but, coming back to the old scenes again, it struck me for the first time what a difficult life Mrs. Marmaduke Radcliffe had led. Even the days of her courtship must have been troubled, for it had sorely displeased Sir Nicholas that his heir should fall in love with a dowerless maid, and a Protestant to boot, and Marmaduke had made matters still more trying to his father by joining the Church of England himself, and leaving directions in his will that his children should be brought up in the same faith. Then he had died before they had been married a year, and his widow had still further disappointed Sir Nicholas by giving birth to a daughter instead of a son, whereby the Goldrill estate would pass upon his death to his younger brother, who, although of his own creed, was not a man in whom any

one put much confidence—at least, so I have heard Zinogle say.

Mrs. Radcliffe put many questions to me about my life at Cambridge, to which I replied dutifully, though, at the same time, I could not forbear now and again glancing at Audrey as she moved about, chatting now with this tenant, now with that. She had grown up among them much as I had done, and she loved and respected these sturdy North-country folk, and they, needless to say, were quite ready to like one so winsome.

‘And what are your plans now?’ asked Mrs. Radcliffe.

Her voice made me start guiltily, for, truth to tell, I had paid no very great heed to what she had been saying as to the changes that had come about during my absence, or at any rate had given it but a divided attention, hearing also Audrey’s merry talk with Zinogle.

‘What are your plans?’ said Mrs. Radcliffe once more, and there was something in her look and tone that disconcerted me horribly. I felt as if my heart had been suddenly laid bare before her, as if she knew all about the love which had quietly grown with my growth and strengthened with my strength, and had now taken possession of me body and soul. I grew hot all over beneath the searching inquiry of those grey eyes, which were so like Audrey’s in shape and colour, but so unlike in expression.

I stammered like a stupid schoolboy. ‘Sir Wilfrid Lawson has made me his secretary, ma’am,’ I explained. ‘I shall be sometimes at the house on St. Herbert’s Isle, but more often at Isel Hall.’

Mrs. Radcliffe looked relieved, for Isel Hall lies beyond Bassenthwaite and Cockermouth, and is, as I found to my cost, a most cruel distance from Lord’s Island.

And at the thought of this and the recollection that it was sheer midsummer madness for a poor and penniless foundling of doubtful birth to woo Audrey Radcliffe, a great heaviness fell upon me, and maybe it would have been better had that sobering recollection continued to weigh me down; only, unfortunately, all things seem possible at twenty, and no sooner had Zinogle played the first two or three bars of the merry air 'Come, lasses and lads,' than my spirits had risen again, and before the great bell had ceased clanging I had asked Audrey to be my partner in the country dance, and we were galloping down the middle and up again.

I do not know whether at Court Audrey would have been considered a good dancer; perhaps in the stiff and stately minuets she might not have excelled, but at a country dance no one could beat her; she was all life and animation and gaiety; she enjoyed it as unfeignedly as a child. As for me, naturally enough, I was in the seventh heaven of happiness, and came down to earth again with a shock as Zinogle ceased playing, and—the dance being over—we suddenly perceived that two visitors had entered the hall while it was in progress, and were now talking to Sir Nicholas and Mrs. Radcliffe. Audrey just glanced at me, and then laughed.

'I see you do not recognise them,' she said. 'Come and let me introduce you.'

There was no doubt that the guest who stood talking to Sir Nicholas was a remarkably fine man. His huge proportions seemed to dwarf the old knight altogether; he was broad and massive, and held his head very erect, as though calmly conscious of his own immense superiority to the average mortals he met. At the first glance I disliked the fellow, but when I saw him stoop to salute Audrey, and speak to her in his affected, patronising tone, I longed to kick him.

‘Here is an old schoolfellow of yours,’ she said, cheerfully; ‘but you fail to recognise each other. Let me present Mr. Derwent, Mr. Brownrigg.’

I bowed stiffly, but Henry Brownrigg with a laugh—artificial as the rest of his manners and customs—held out his huge hand, and said in most patronising tones, ‘What, Michael Derwent, the foundling? I had almost forgotten your existence. What have you been doing with yourself all this time?’

There was nothing for it but to take the massive hand he proffered; it was so broad and large that it felt like shaking hands with a beef-steak. I muttered something about Cambridge, and Sir Wilfrid Lawson, angry with myself for letting this conceited fellow put me so foolishly out of countenance.

‘Ah, to be sure; Sir Wilfrid Lawson was your patron from the first; I remember now,’ he said, looking me over in his supercilious way. ‘Don’t you find him rather too outspoken—rather uncompromising? He seems to me a dangerous patron in these dubious days, when no one knows which way things will turn.’

‘He has always been a good friend to me,’ I said, hotly, ‘and it scarcely becomes his secretary to criticise him.’

‘Oh, he has made you his secretary?’ said Brownrigg, with a covert sneer. ‘I see; you are, of course, quite right; you mustn’t bite the hand that feeds you.’

With that he turned his back upon me and began to talk in a low voice to Audrey, who seemed very well pleased with his attentions, as indeed was most natural, for there was no denying that he was a fine fellow, though of a type I instinctively loathe.

Old Sir Nicholas glanced at them thoughtfully, then with a slight shrug of the shoulders he turned to me and said in his kind, courteous fashion. ‘If you will come with me into my study we will have a chat with

your old friend and tutor, Mr. Noel; I see him over yonder, listening to one of William Hollins' tales.'

And, truly enough, on looking across the hall I saw that Mr. Noel, while listening to the farmer's talk, had his keen grey eyes fixed upon our group, and had evidently noticed all that had passed. He gave me a very pleasant greeting and we followed the old knight into his study, a small, square room leading out of the hall. It was lighted only by the blazing fire on the hearth, and through the uncurtained window we could see the moonlight on the water and the dark outline of Skiddaw against the pale sky. Sir Nicholas, tired with the effort of receiving his guests, sank down wearily in his armchair, while Mr. Noel held me for some time in talk by the window.

He had lived for the last ten years with Sir Nicholas, and passed for his secretary; he kept all the household accounts, looked after the property at Patterdale which belonged to this younger branch of the Derwentwaters, and during our childhood had acted as tutor to Audrey. He wore secular dress, but of late years it had become an open secret in the neighbourhood that he was in reality a priest, probably one of the many Papists who had been in peril of their lives during the late king's reign, when panic had possessed the country and many false reports had been spread abroad.

Mr. Noel had always been exceptionally kind to me, as I said before, and it was largely through his influence that Audrey and I had been permitted to continue friends after our actual childhood was over; it was from him that I had learnt many things which I could never have learnt in the Keswick High School; and my success at Cambridge was due to the thoroughness of the grounding which he had given me in his leisure hours. Mrs. Radcliffe had taken good care that he should never interfere with our religious views; but I am not sure

that I could have resisted his strong, indirect influence had I not been withdrawn from it during the most critical years of life and plunged into the wider world of the University.

Coming back to my old friend and teacher after the years of absence, I noticed one or two things about him which as a boy had wholly escaped me. Beneath his polished manners and his kindly, quiet way of talking there was a suggestion of hardness. His power of reading people's thoughts seemed almost uncanny, and he presented a curious contrast to the saintly old knight, for where the one was simple as a child the other was evidently a man of schemes, though always, I should fancy, schemes woven for what he thought the benefit of others, since he was a good and a kind-hearted man. The more he talked to me, however, that evening, the more I became conscious that he looked upon life as a very serious game of chess which the Almighty had set him to play with the devil as opponent. We—the laity whom he came across—were merely the pieces in the game, to be moved as he thought best. And I am sure he honestly believed that free-will was only given to the laity that they might resign their wills into the hands of the priest, who would mediate betwixt them and heaven, guide all their affairs with the discretion and wisdom which come from knowing the secrets of all other men in the confessional, and, saving us a mort of trouble, would personally conduct us through life in the easiest way conceivable.

Nevertheless, though in common with the vast majority of Englishmen I abhorred this notion of priestly domination, I loved my old friend very heartily, and spite of his failure to number me among his converts I think he loved me, too. There were three things which bound us closely together; the first was a mutual admiration for old Sir Nicholas and his island home, the

second was a love of climbing the fells and crags of Borrowdale, and the third was a common detestation of Henry Brownrigg.

My heart warmed to the old tutor when I found that this last was stronger than ever.

‘Why are the Brownriggs here to-night?’ I questioned, seeing that Sir Nicholas had fallen asleep, and that it was possible to inquire.

‘Why, indeed?’ said Mr. Noel, shaking his head. ‘I know not; it is Mrs. Radcliffe’s doing. I believe she maintains that the sister is a good friend for Mistress Audrey. All I can say is that it is invariably the brother who talks to her.’

I winced as his searching eyes rested for a moment on my face, being sure that the torturing jealousy which for the first time filled my heart must have been clearly visible.

But Mr. Noel was always full of tact; there was no slightest reference to Audrey in his next remark.

‘Henry Brownrigg,’ he said, ‘thinks himself a fine gentleman, but I can only say that for all his London manners and his fine clothes he is but pinchbeck after all. The poorest statesman in Borrowdale would have had better breeding than to greet you in the fashion he did to-night.’

‘Sir,’ I said, ‘as a lad you always bade me to wait and to ask no questions, but I can wait no longer. I must and will try to unravel the mystery of my parentage.’

‘I still advise you to wait,’ said Mr. Noel, thoughtfully. ‘Had there been any chance of discovering the truth do you not think it would have transpired in twenty years’ time? Besides, what will you gain? It is pretty clear from the clothes in which you were found that you are of gentle birth, and to my mind it is clear that this ring shows that you were born in wedlock.’

‘I was always grateful to you for holding that the

ring was evidence,' I replied. 'But no one else accepts it as evidence; even Mrs. Radcliffe, kind as she is, never admitted that it proved anything.'

'Mrs. Radcliffe invariably takes the opposite side to any opinion of mine,' said Mr. Noel, smiling somewhat grimly. 'Her Protestant prejudice is too strong to allow her to put faith in anything I do, or in any conclusion I draw.'

There was a touch of bitterness in his tone at which one could not wonder, for what he said was true enough. Mrs. Radcliffe, though always civil to him, could not bring herself to trust him. They had lived under the same roof for twenty years, but in reality they knew little of each other, as both were lynx-eyed to detect the other's faults, and somehow never succeeded in reaching that meeting-place of mutual interest which must be gained before heart can answer to heart.

Our talk was interrupted just at this point. I felt a light touch on my arm which thrilled me through and through. There stood Audrey, looking more exquisite than ever in the pale moonlight.

'What grave discourses are you having?' she exclaimed, merrily, yet speaking low for fear of disturbing Sir Nicholas. 'Come into the hall and let us roast our chestnuts and see what fortune lies before us. Zinogle and some of the others are playing at bob apple and the sight would make even a Quaker laugh.'

CHAPTER VI

Recollections of Michael Derwent (continued).

DURING the next few days Sir Wilfrid kept me hard at work, and it was not until Sunday that I again had a chance of seeing Audrey. After service, as we came out of Crosthwaite Church, I had the good fortune to overtake her, and while Sir Wilfrid walked with Mrs. Radcliffe it fell to my share to carry Audrey's Prayer-book for her and to escort her to the landing-place. It was then that I was able to tell her of our old foster-mother's invitation to spend the following day with her at Grange; and Audrey, who had a great love for the place where some of the happiest days of our childhood had been spent, quickly gained her mother's permission, and it was arranged that Dickon and I should call for her in the boat early in the morning if the weather permitted, and that we should spend a long day with Anne Fisher at Grange Farm.

Poets have sung dismal ditties about November, but as a matter of fact that particular November morning when we set out on our expedition was the most beautiful day conceivable. The sun had just dispersed the thick mist which had shrouded Derwentwater, but here and there on the side of Skiddaw foam-like wreaths still lingered. Causey Pike had but lately thrown back its silvery veil, and now rose radiant in the morning sunshine, a light sprinkling of snow on its summit, which contrasted with the golden-brown bracken on Catbells;

while the thickly-wooded shore, with its dark green fir trees and golden beeches and russet oaks, fast thinning after the recent gales, made a perfect setting to the glassy stillness of the water.

Audrey sat in the stern, closely wrapped in a cloak of Lincoln green cloth, and wearing a little Puritan hood in black velvet bordered with fur which suited her vastly well.

‘Have you heard any news?’ she asked, anxiously.

‘Nothing certain,’ I replied. ‘Sir Wilfrid heard last night in Keswick that there were some that had seen the Prince of Orange embark at Brill on Wednesday, and that the Princess had been there to take leave of him and wish him God-speed. But this may be mere idle gossip. It is thought he will land here in the North. I only wish we had a chance to see him.’

‘They say he hath a sour temper,’ said Audrey, ‘but that he is all for toleration. In any case he must be better than King James, who seems the most cruel-hearted bigot that ever wore the crown. Well, let us talk no more of such vexed questions. Have you succeeded yet in your quest?’

‘No,’ I replied; ‘but to-day I mean to question Anne Fisher more closely, and Dickon hath been showing me the exact spot in Borrowdale where he and Sir Wilfrid rescued me.’

‘You must show it to me,’ said Audrey, eagerly; ‘I never understood precisely where it was. Let us come there first, for Anne will be busy making ready the dinner, and will not have time to talk to us yet.’

Accordingly we left Dickon and the boat at Lowdore, and made our way along the mule track to Grange, paused just to greet our foster-mother at the farm, and then wandered into Borrowdale, making our way along the riverside and talking as friends talk when they have

been parted for a long time and have great arrears to make up.

At last we came to the place where, not far from the Bowder Stone, the river, after a broad, shallow reach, grows somewhat narrower, and without much difficulty I found my way again to the old hollow oak which Dickon had pointed out to me. Here, some three years after my birth, they had discovered the remains of an old cloak much weather-stained and covered with mildew, but with a ribbon torn from it in one place, which Anne Fisher stoutly maintained was without question the ribbon which had bound the ring about me.

‘And where did Dickon and Sir Wilfrid find you?’ said Audrey.

‘Close to the river, just by this birch tree, roaring, they say, at the top of my voice.’

‘What hard hearts they must have had who deserted you,’ she exclaimed. ‘They can have been only hirelings. I wonder whether those who found the cloak searched for other things hidden in the tree.’

‘Let us come and look,’ I said, turning back to the oak.

Nothing, however, was to be seen, and, giving up the search, we sat down to rest and chat; and, truth to tell, I was too happy in the present and too full of dreams for the future to care much about what had happened twenty years ago.

‘Look at this ant!’ exclaimed Audrey, laughing. ‘It is toiling along with a grain almost as large as itself. There it goes down the crack by that large stone. Here comes another and another; we must be on the high-road to an anthill.’

With a mischievous smile she tried to lift the big stone, but it was too heavy.

‘You will cause a terrible commotion in that ant kingdom,’ I said, remonstratingly.

‘Never mind,’ she said, laughing. ‘They must have

their revolutions just as we do. Now please enact the Prince of Orange, and let me see what is going on in that world below.'

I tore up the big stone from the moss and earth in which it was embedded. The ants scurried away in all directions, but we scarcely heeded them, for the sun glinted on something bright and shining; it was the gold setting of an oval miniature which lay there unharmed in the earth. Lifting it up eagerly and rubbing the mould from the glass, I saw the face of a beautiful girl with soft brown curls lying on her white shoulders; the face somehow seemed familiar to me.

I turned to Audrey in amazement.

'Who is it?' I said. 'How do I know these features so well?'

'Why,' said Audrey, looking gravely first at the miniature and then at me, 'there can be no doubt whatever about it. This must be your mother; you are her living image, only with the strength of a man in your look. See, the face is rather short, the cheek-bones somewhat high, and the moulding of mouth and chin and the very bright eyes—why, they are precisely like yours.'

We turned the miniature over and searched anxiously for any trace of a name, but there was none, nor could we imagine why the miniature should have been hidden in this extraordinary fashion; it almost looked as though the hirelings who had deserted me had some special dislike to my mother.

We went back to Grange Farm to show the treasure we had discovered to Anne Fisher, and she, too, instantly recognised the likeness which had struck us both. Unluckily it conveyed to her mind an idea which had not occurred to me. When Audrey was out looking at her old friends the pigeons my foster-mother drew me aside to give me a word of counsel.

‘Keep this quiet, my lad,’ she said, ‘for I fear it points more to your mother’s shame than anything yet has done. No doubt it was the old story of a wily-tongued deceiver, and maybe she died at your birth, and her family put away all remembrance of her and left you to perish. Depend upon it, lad, there’s shame in the story, and you would do well not to search further.’

‘Would you have me believe anything evil of such an one as this?’ I asked, looking again at the lovely face, which was as guileless as the face of a child.

‘Ah, lad, you are young,’ she said. ‘God knows life is harder for such as have a face like this, for they’ll have sair temptations, and willna find it easy faring. But don’t take it too heavily. You are not the first that has been born nameless and yet has done good work in the world.’

But though she spoke cheeringly my heart sank down like lead, for I thought of Audrey, and felt more than ever cut off from her, and I thought of Henry Brownrigg with a sort of dumb fury. Then I remembered the ring and the motto, and felt certain that at any rate my mother must have been deceived by some mock marriage; to think otherwise of that exquisitely pure face was impossible. It was my father who had betrayed her and forsaken me and tossed aside the very picture of the girl whose life he had ruined. For what had I found this miniature if not to aid me in tracing him out and calling him to account? The truth should be dragged from him, cost what it might, and my mother should be avenged.

‘Come, my lad,’ said Anne Fisher; ‘dinner is ready. Will you go and tell Mistress Audrey?’

I strode out of the houseplace, and, standing in the porch, saw that Audrey was surrounded by pigeons, which she was feeding. One that was specially tame had perched on her shoulder and was eating from her hand.

‘There, you greedy birds,’ she cried; ‘you have eaten every grain, now fly away and let me go to my dinner.’

She clapped her hands and away flew the pigeons, their white wings flashing in the sunlight, and making a vivid streak of brightness against the purple grey heights of Maiden Moor.

‘Oh, Mic!’ she said, ‘how good it is to be here, away from all cares and anxieties! What pleasant summer visits we used to have here! I could almost wish we were just children again. By the bye, I never heard what you thought of Henry Brownrigg. Has he not grown into a fine-looking man?’

‘Very,’ I said, drily.

‘He is so tall and strong,’ she said, reflectively; ‘I do like those great big men.’

‘Yes, women always admire that “prize ox” kind of man,’ I said, with a touch of bitterness, which did not escape her.

‘Now, Michael,’ she said, laughing, ‘I am not going to allow you to make an eternal feud out of a schoolboy quarrel. You two will have to be good friends now that you have come back to the North. Don’t be cross; come and be fed.’

It was impossible to resist her coaxing, merry face; we went into the house-place, and Anne Fisher feasted us with all the favourite dishes of our childhood, beginning with eggs and bacon and ending with girdle cakes.

It was dusk when Dickon and I rowed Audrey back to Lord’s Island; I remember that she sang, as she sat in the stern, that quaint old song which begins, ‘Now, Robin, lend to me thy bow.’ Her voice was quite untrained, but sweet and clear as a bird’s. When she had left us it seemed to me that all the brightness had gone out of my world.

‘Let us come to Keswick,’ I said to Dickon. ‘Sir

Wilfrid will want to hear if any news has come, and I must speak to Zinogle.'

The German fiddler lived in the market-place in a house not far from that of Sir John Banks. He owned a couple of the upper rooms, and had no belongings in the world but his fiddle and his dog; also, perhaps, I should add his pipe, which was, he always maintained, the best of companions.

I found him as usual in an atmosphere of music and tobacco, and he seemed not a little interested in the miniature when I showed it to him. He agreed with Anne Fisher that it would be as well were I not to mention it to people in general.

'There is one person, though, that ought to see it,' he remarked, 'and that is Mr. Noel. Show it to him and see what he says.'

'Yes, I will show it him,' I replied; 'he always maintained that the ring was a wedding-ring.'

'Did it ever strike you that he perhaps knows more than he says?' asked Zinogle, his keen eyes looking right into mine.

'If he knew the truth surely he would tell it,' I said; 'but no, it is impossible. From the way in which he was talking only the other night it's clear to me that he knows nothing. He was saying that if it had been possible for the truth to come out it would surely have transpired in twenty years.'

'H'm,' grunted Zinogle, 'you might take that saying in two ways. He is deep and subtle. I still think he knows the truth; and if he learnt it in the confessional, why, his tongue is tied. That must be a bad predicament for an honest man, to know, perhaps, of some atrocious wrong and to be unable to speak and save the innocent.'

'The whole system is an accursed one,' I said, hotly. 'Ha! what is that hubbub in the market-place?'

Such a shouting and cheering and huzzaing as I had never heard in quiet little Keswick rent the air. We thrust our heads out of the window, and saw that the people were crowding round a rider who had drawn rein at the town hall, a quaint old timber building in the centre of the square.

‘The Prince must have landed!’ cried Zinogle, and with one accord we rushed down stairs and out into the market-place, there to hear the welcome tidings that on the morning of the 5th the Prince of Orange had landed at Brixham in Devonshire, and that King James would no longer be free to trample the laws of England under foot.

We had expected the landing to be in the north, and ever, since the trial of the seven bishops, preparations for a rising had been silently going on under the leadership of the Earl of Devonshire, the Earl of Derby, and my Lord Lumley. It was something of a disappointment that Brixham should have chanced to be the landing-place, but as there was no question of fighting, at any rate at present, we Cumbrians worked off our excitement in other ways, and there was a hurried climbing of Skiddaw to kindle the beacon, which had last been fired when the seven bishops were acquitted in the summer.

The night was clear and frosty, and the beacon blazed gloriously in the still air, bearing its good tidings into many a distant dale and town. One old veteran, who had climbed as lustily as any of us youngsters, stood with his white head uncovered, and solemnly gave thanks to God for having sent a deliverer to the nation, and then Zinogle, who for all his comic vein had a grave side as well to his character, played on his fiddle the first line of the Old Hundredth, and we all fell in with his thought and sang the psalm which more than any other tends to deepen joy and quicken gratitude.

Then came a race down the mountain at some peril

to our necks, and after pushing our way through the thronged market-square, where many drunken revellers were shouting 'Lero, lero, lillibulero,' at the tops of their voices, Dickon and I made our way to the landing-place and rowed across the quiet water to St. Herbert's Isle. There was a faint yellow light in Audrey's bed-chamber, and it looked pale as a primrose in contrast with the red glare of the beacon, which still blazed on Skiddaw. I wondered much how the news would affect the divided household on Lord's Island.

CHAPTER VII

As Michael rowed past Lord's Island the old knight and his chaplain were sitting by the hearth in the study, talking gravely over the great event of the day. That unwelcome red glare in the sky, that blazing beacon on Skiddaw, had roused even gentle old Sir Nicholas to think anxiously of the future which lay before them. But it was not so much of the country in general as of his own estate and his own private affairs that Sir Nicholas thought.

'I fancy however things turn they will not molest me,' he said. 'They know that I meddle not in affairs of State, and that for the last year I have not even quitted the island. But when my brother succeeds to the estate matters will be very different. He has ever been headstrong and over-much embroiled in plots and politics. If this scheme of my daughter-in-law's for marrying Audrey to young Mr. Brownrigg is carried out I foresee nothing but storms in the future.'

'That is too true,' said Mr. Noel, thoughtfully. 'It would be to Henry Brownrigg's interest to get your brother out of the way and seize on the estate in his wife's name. Oh, he is quite capable of that, for he is ambitious and a lover of money, besides being as bitter a Protestant as ever I met. If he had his way every Catholic would be driven from the land. Heaven grant that pretty Mistress Audrey may never be his wife.'

'Amen to that,' said Sir Nicholas, feebly rubbing his thin hands. 'It is the wish of my heart to see her

wedded to young Cuthbert Salkeld, who is not only rich, but a good Catholic and of excellent character. Her mother is bitterly opposed to it, however, and will not hear of her being given in marriage to any but a Protestant.'

'How Mrs. Radcliffe can be hoodwinked by such an overbearing and pragmatistical piece of conceit as Henry Brownrigg passes my understanding,' said Mr. Noel. 'But she can see no fault in him. And what is more, if she encourages his suit, I fear Mistress Audrey will be won over, for no doubt he is a fine figure of a man, and that goes for much with one so young. If it be indeed out of the question to urge the marriage with Mr. Salkeld, how would it be to take advantage of Michael Derwent's perfectly evident devotion to your granddaughter?'

'Eh? What? Does the wind sit in that quarter?' said Sir Nicholas, with some surprise. 'I knew they were good friends, but never guessed that the boy dreamt of such a thing.'

'He has said naught,' said Mr. Noel, 'but I have known him all his life, and can read his face like a book. He is very much in love—there is no doubt of that.'

'But his birth, Father, and his fortune? In no way is he a fitting match for my granddaughter.'

'Oh, as for his birth, that is indeed a mystery,' said Mr. Noel; 'but everything pointed to his being of gentle lineage. As for money, it is true that he hath but what he earns, yet I am much mistaken if he does not make his mark in the world. Then, although he is a Protestant, and for that reason might prove acceptable as a son-in-law to Mrs. Radcliffe, he is no bigot, as we have good reason to know. Indeed, I am sure he would be the very one to help and shelter any Catholic, if he deemed him hardly dealt with by the Government.'

There is a generosity about Michael Derwent which is wholly wanting in such men as Henry Brownrigg.'

'Yes, yes, they are poles apart, and I like the lad well enough. Still, it is not such a match as a Radcliffe might have looked for.'

The priest's face bore a curious expression; one might almost have fancied that there was a momentary gleam of humour in his grey eyes. He turned away, and began to pace the room restlessly. 'Of course, the other match would be in every way more desirable,' he said; 'young Salkeld is a good Catholic and will succeed to the title, but that seems out of the question during Mrs. Radcliffe's lifetime. The point now is whether, to get rid of the Brownrigg incubus, it might not be worth while to encourage Michael Derwent.'

'I leave it to you,' said Sir Nicholas, with a sigh. 'Such things are better managed by active and observant people. I am merely a recluse. You love Audrey, and have her best interests at heart. Act as it seems well to you. For my own part, I have always liked Michael.'

Mr. Noel was quite ready to echo these last words, for his affection for his pupil was perfectly genuine. Nevertheless, he had no scruples as to using Michael in whatever way seemed best for the general furtherance of his well-meaning schemes; and it was quite possible, as he now foresaw, that, after encouraging his passion for Audrey, circumstances might arise which would make it politic to reverse these tactics.

There were so many things which might alter the whole state of affairs. Not only private happenings, but the troubled and uncertain state of the country, made it a most interesting problem for the priest's brain to busy itself with. He sat musing over it in silence. The Salkeld marriage was the game he had actually planned, but his opponent's play had necessitated a new

development, in which Michael for a time was to be the piece brought into action.

He, meanwhile, quite unconscious of all this, was supping with Sir Wilfrid and discussing the great news of the day, while Audrey and her mother, having watched the beacon die out and darkness settle over Derwent-water, lingered a little over their preparations for the night to talk over the news as it affected their own particular neighbourhood.

‘The Lowthers will sleep more peacefully now,’ said Mrs. Radcliffe, with a smile. ‘And Henry Brownrigg will feel that his star is in the ascendant. He is pretty sure to get promotion if the Prince’s cause triumphs, as there is every reason to think it will.’

‘That will just suit him; his sister says he is very ambitious,’ said Audrey, laughing. ‘What will they make him, I wonder? He certainly loves ordering other folk about.’

Her mother glanced at her a little anxiously. Did this frank criticism of Henry Brownrigg hide any deeper feelings? She could not feel sure; and her heart misgave her a little when Audrey began a graphic description of her happy day in Borrowdale, and of how they had discovered the miniature.

‘Poor Michael!’ said Mrs. Radcliffe. ‘This makes his case even worse. There can be no doubt now of his mother’s disgrace. To-morrow, Audrey, we will go over to Millbeck Hall and see the Brownriggs. Henry is sure to have the latest news as to the Prince’s progress, and I have great confidence in his opinion. Young as he is, I would take his judgment before Sir Wilfrid’s.’

To this Audrey was quite ready to agree. To her there seemed no comparison between Sir Wilfrid and that paragon of perfection at Millbeck Hall. Undoubtedly she was much flattered by Henry Brownrigg’s attentions, and honestly admired his splendid physique;

nor was she altogether unaware of a certain throbbing of the heart and quickening of the pulses at the very mention of his name. But these details were nothing to Father Noel; he rated them at precisely what they were worth, and with a shrug of his shoulders calmly continued his game of human chess.

The peaceful English Revolution meanwhile went quietly on its course. The Prince of Orange, who had come over at the pressing invitation of the leading men among Tories and Whigs, and worthy representatives of the Church of England and the Nonconformists, was naturally acknowledged with little delay by the nation. York and Newcastle, and indeed city after city, declared in his favour, and King James found that his tyranny had wholly alienated the hearts of the people. The spies sent by him to find out what was doing in the West took his money and quietly joined the Prince, so that it was almost impossible for the King to get any true idea of his son-in-law's movements. He could only learn that day after day one great man after another joined his army, the cruellest cut of all being, perhaps, the desertion of Lord Churchill and the Duke of Grafton, who joined the Prince at Axminster, Churchill quitting the King's army at night, and explaining by letter that he could not fight against the Protestant cause.

Then followed negotiations which might very possibly have left James the crown, but made for ever out of the question that despotic authority which he desired. Unfortunately for himself, he had all his father's duplicity without his virtues, and while treating with the Prince of Orange he was also negotiating with France and endeavouring to set up his despotism once more by French aid.

At last, his plight growing desperate, he resolved upon flight. Having previously contrived to send the Queen and her child to France, he left Whitehall on the tenth

of December disguised as the servant of Sir Edward Hales, and favoured by the darkness, for it was three o'clock in the morning.

Thinking to plunge the country into difficulties, he flung the Great Seal into the river, and escaped in a miserable fishing-boat which had been provided by his companion. But unluckily, Sir Edward Hales was recognised by some fishermen at Feversham, who took upon themselves to check his progress, and the King, thus caught in the act of running away, was ignominiously brought back again, to the general embarrassment of the people and their leaders, who were at a great loss to know what to do with him. Some were for keeping him prisoner, and it became clear that while he remained at Whitehall disorders would be certain to arise in London. It was at length suggested to him that he should retire to Rochester, and from thence in a few days he once more escaped by night, and going on board a frigate in the Medway, was swiftly borne, as the people would have said, 'by a Protestant wind' to Ambleteuse, from which place he made his way to St. Germain's.

CHAPTER VIII

Recollections of Michael Derwent

ALL through December and January there was scarcely anything but talk of public events, and Sir Wilfrid kept me hard at work, so that, what with writing of letters and attending conferences at Cockermouth and elsewhere, I began to despair of ever seeing Audrey again. Henry Brownrigg had just been promoted to the office of Under-Sheriff, and it maddened me to think that he might see her every day if it so pleased him. However at last my chance came, and his, thanks to providence—or as I sometimes fancy to the machinations of Father Noel—was for the time lost.

It came about in this fashion.

There lived at Raby Castle in the county of Durham one Sir Christopher Vane—son of the late Sir Harry Vane, commonly known as the patriot—and he had arranged to hold high festival at Raby late in February, in honour of a family event it was said, though probably not without reference to the great change which had taken place in public affairs.

Sir Christopher had at one time held office under King James; the Sovereign's illegalities had, however, so disgusted him that he gave up the untenable theory that the King could do no wrong, and in the reaction went back to the faith of his fathers and became a strong advocate of freedom. It was therefore both convenient and seemly that his change of front should be

generally known, and by inviting a host of friends and showing them a princely hospitality he managed very neatly to effect his object.

Sir Wilfrid Lawson being an old friend of the Vanes was among the first to be invited, and I thought myself in luck's way to get the chance of accompanying him, specially when I learnt through old Zinogle, who chanced to be in Cockermouth to play at a wedding, that Audrey and her mother had also received an invitation,—owing I believe to some past connection between the Vanes and the Radcliffes.

We left Isel Hall just after the news had arrived that the Convention had offered the crown to the Prince of Orange, and the Princess Mary, and that they had been proclaimed King and Queen at London and Westminster. Great therefore were the rejoicings at Cockermouth, where what with church bells ringing, and the people half wild with joy to think that the suspense and uncertainty were ended, and the reign of toleration beginning, we found some difficulty in making our way through the thronged streets; for—let alone the crowd—there were scores of folk that wanted a word with Sir Wilfrid, he being much beloved in all the neighbourhood. However at length we were riding along the quiet shore of Bassenthwaite and as dusk fell found ourselves once more in the familiar little market town of Keswick. We lay that night at the Royal Oak, where Zinogle came to see me, bringing me word that Henry Brownrigg was to accompany the ladies from Lord's Island on their journey early the next morning. This was not very cheerful hearing, and I lay awake a whole hour brooding over the news. Nevertheless things looked brighter by daylight, and having made a hearty breakfast I set out with my patron in excellent spirits, full of hope that we might fall in with Audrey upon the road.

We had only just quitted the town when suddenly a man sprang forward from the shelter of a great beech tree and, waving a paper in his hand to attract attention, called to Sir Wilfrid to draw rein.

‘There’s mischief afoot, sir,’ he panted breathlessly. ‘Of your charity bear this to the Under-Sheriff—they say he has ridden to Stable Hills Farm.’

Before Sir Wilfrid could put a single question to him the man had thrust the letter into his hand and had dashed away into the wood as though dreading detection.

‘Here’s a pretty state of things,’ said Sir Wilfrid. ‘Mischief afoot already and the King and Queen but just proclaimed! We must lose no time, Michael, but carry this news to Henry Brownrigg. Did you ever see that fellow before?’

‘I never caught a full sight of his face, his hat was over his eyes, sir,’ I replied. ‘But his way of speaking was not Cumbrian. Now I think of it, his speech savoured a little of that Irish cobbler that Father Noel nursed through the small-pox.’

‘Ah, I remember hearing about that,’ said Sir Wilfrid, ‘though I never saw the cobbler. Father Noel has as kind a heart as any man in the county. Pity he is on the wrong side.’

We rode as fast as might be to Stable Hills Farm, which was on the eastern side of Derwentwater and within a stone’s throw of Lord’s Island. It was here the Radcliffes stabled their horses.

In front of the farm there was a little group which I eagerly scanned. Audrey, looking wonderfully fresh and winsome in her brown riding skirt and broad plumed hat, was already mounted on her chestnut mare, Firefly; and Henry Brownrigg was in the act of helping Mrs. Radcliffe to her pillion behind one of the serving-men, while Father Noel stood talking to William

Hollins the farmer. He glanced round quickly as we approached and I am sure I saw a twinkle of amused satisfaction in his eye as we drew rein.

‘I am glad to have caught you before you started, Mr. Brownrigg,’ exclaimed Sir Wilfrid, after saluting the ladies. ‘Just as we rode out of Keswick a man thrust this letter for you into my hand and asked me to give it you with all speed, as mischief was brewing. What the fellow means I have no notion, nor was he a man I had ever seen before. He disappeared before I could question him, and perhaps the letter will explain itself.’

Henry Brownrigg, with an important air which evidently amused Father Noel, slowly broke the seal and read the letter. As he read, his face darkened. He read the communication a second time more carefully and stood for a few minutes deep in thought, not unconscious that all eyes were upon him, for he was the sort of man to find this a very soothing sensation to his self-love.

‘Well, there is no help for it,’ he said, with a shrug of the shoulders, ‘my duty calls me away, ladies; there is, I fear, mischief afoot and I shall not be able to escort you to Raby Castle. Be sure that I shall follow you, though, as soon as I can. Possibly to-morrow or the next day.’

He handed the missive to Sir Wilfrid, who quite agreed with him that he must stay and inquire into the matter and courteously volunteered to take his place as escort to Mrs. Radcliffe and her daughter.

They were very glad to accept the suggestion, and Audrey, after saying a courteous word or two of regret to Henry Brownrigg and hoping that the business would not detain him long, was very soon chatting gaily enough with me, nor could I read in her face any sign that she was grieving over the absence of the Under-

Sheriff. I built a great deal on this—foolishly enough—not having learnt yet that women have a most extraordinary power of hiding their true feelings, and that the most skilful of all actresses is a maiden who would fain conceal her love story from the public gaze.

I shall never pass along the Penrith road without remembering our cheery ride that day.

‘Isel Hall has taught you how to talk,’ she said once with a roguish glance in my direction. ‘The silent Cambridge graduate is no more!’

And how was I to sum up audacity enough to tell her the truth, that it was not the time at Isel which had taught me, but just the delight of being in her presence which, since that first bewildering November afternoon when we had met once more on Lord’s Island, had changed my whole world, and made me for the first time feel that I truly lived. Without her it was mere existence, but with her life indeed.

We broke the journey at the most comfortable of the wayside inns, arriving at Staindrop, the village close to Raby Castle, just as the sun was setting on the second day.

The broad village street was unusually lively, and as we passed the old grey-towered church Audrey drew my attention to a group of pretty children standing by the wall, and with a laugh tossed them some comfits from a little embroidered bag hanging at her side.

‘I warrant you they envy us, these chubby little mortals,’ she said. ‘And yet, to tell the truth, I would far liefer dismount and play with them than ride on to this stately place where we shall find only strangers.’

But spite of the shyness natural enough to one who was used to nothing but country life, she gave a cry of delight when, as we rode up the rising ground, that splendid pile of massive towers and turrets and battle-

mented walls came into view. The red sun was sinking like a glowing ball in the grey misty sky and a rosy glow rested on the castle—the pride of the neighbourhood ever since the days of Canute. The place had been partially ruined and had been sold to the elder Sir Henry Vane by Charles I. According to the purchaser it had then been merely ‘a hillock o’ stanes,’ but judicious re-building had soon wrought a magical transformation and it is said King Charles considered that the splendid castle which he visited later on had been very cheaply obtained. Passing over the drawbridge and across a courtyard we rode into the actual castle itself, dismounting at the foot of the great staircase where Sir Christopher stood to receive his guests. He was a somewhat heavy-featured man, and I, naturally enough, expected the most formal of greetings from him, but as I made my bow and his eyes rested for a moment on my face a look of astonishment and a muttered ejaculation escaped him; however, quickly recovering himself, he turned again to speak with Mrs. Radcliffe, and it was not until the following day that I understood the meaning of the look of recognition which I had certainly seen in his eyes.

Chancing to be early astir, I came across Sir Christopher in one of the corridors, and he, with a kindly greeting and a somewhat searching look, invited me to go with him into the walled garden at a little distance from the house.

‘I understand from Sir Wilfrid that you are his secretary,’ he began, as we entered the garden. ‘I did not catch your name yesterday,’ he glanced at me questioningly.

‘I am called Michael Derwent, sir,’ I replied. ‘But I have no real surname, being just a foundling. Sir Wilfrid rescued me twenty years ago in Borrowdale by the river side.’

A most extraordinary look passed over Sir Christopher's face.

'Do you mean that he found you there deserted?' he asked quickly.

'Yes, deserted and half dead with cold and hunger. Luckily he chanced to be out early that morning on a fishing expedition or it would have been all over with me.'

'And you have never found out anything of your parentage?'

'Never, sir, though I would give the world to do so. I am in a miserable position now, and until I can find out the truth my career is sure to be more or less hampered.'

'Perhaps I can help you up to a certain point,' said Sir Christopher cautiously. 'I recognised you in a moment, for you are the living image of your mother.'

'You knew her, sir?' I asked eagerly, and after a moment's reflection I drew out the miniature, which I had never ceased to wear since the day we had discovered it, and placed it in his hands.

He looked at it with admiration but quite without any trace of special feeling; clearly my mother had been but an acquaintance, and yet it set all my pulses throbbing at double time to think that he had once seen her and that he knew her story.

'Is she still living?' I asked eagerly.

'No,' he replied, 'she died at your birth. Poor girl! she was only seventeen if I remember right.'

'Then it must have been my father who deserted me.'

'Yes, I suppose so,' he replied, cautiously weighing his words. 'Your father was my friend. I understood that he meant to leave you in charge of some of the dalesfolk. I suppose he changed his mind.'

'At least tell me his name,' I said with rage in my heart.

‘I wish I could do so. But I was a mere lad at the time,’ replied Sir Christopher, ‘and my friend who was considerably older extorted a vow of secrecy from me.’

‘I suppose he wronged my mother and then naturally enough desired to make an end of me,’ I said with burning cheeks.

‘No, no, it was not so bad as that,’ said Sir Christopher. ‘He may have neglected your mother, it is true; his passion was too vehement to last long, it burnt itself out in a few weeks. But he wedded her honestly enough in London, though at what church I dare not tell you. I was one of the witnesses myself however, and can set your mind at rest on that score.’

I was silent for a minute trying to realise that the load which had so long oppressed me had suddenly been taken away and that the worst obstacle to my acceptance by Mrs. Radcliffe as Audrey’s suitor no longer existed. We passed a great bush of lavender about which a spider had been spinning its web, and now all wet with morning dew it sparkled in the sun like a dainty network of diamonds. No less brilliant was the dream castle I hastily reared upon these words of Sir Christopher’s.

‘Is my father still living, sir?’ I asked after a pause.

‘Yes, but it is many years since I saw him. And now I believe he is not in England. You wonder no doubt why it was that he deserted you since you were his rightful heir. I have no right to explain that matter to you, but I will certainly communicate with him and let him know that I have come across you. He may yet acknowledge you—indeed I should think he would be glad to do so. There, let us say no more of the matter; I have perhaps already been ill-advised in speaking so freely.’

With a few kindly and hospitable words he left me to think over the astonishing news that he had told me,

and I might have paced up and down the garden paths for hours had I not been interrupted. There was a merry shout and a ringing child's laugh; then, down the green alley in pursuit of a ball, ran a little imp of about seven years of age, hotly pursued by Audrey, who always dearly loved a good romp with children.

'Neighbour, I've come to torment you—do as I do!' was her laughing greeting, and whether I would or no she dragged me into the game which, to the great delight of little Will Vane, we continued until he was fetched away by one of the servants.

'Why, 'tis as hot as midsummer!' said Audrey, her face all aglow with the fresh air and the exercise; 'come let us rest awhile in this arbour. What were you meditating upon so solemnly when we came across you just now?'

Then I told her of all that Sir Christopher had said, and her delighted sympathy made my heart beat fast. Audrey had a way of identifying herself with her friends and their interests which very few women possess. Many can give sympathy, but she gave her whole being and made you feel that she cared for your concerns almost more than you cared yourself.

All this I understood afterwards, but in the glow of hope and excitement which filled my heart this morning it seemed to me that a whole new life was opening before me and that all the wishes of my heart were going to be granted at once. Yet I dared not tell her yet of my love, though I longed to do so. For that it was surely best to wait until all things connected with my father had been made clear. The only thing that I ventured to do was to ask her to tell her mother what Sir Christopher had said, and later in the day Mrs. Radcliffe spoke very kindly to me about this, while Sir Wilfrid, who probably had some inkling as to my feelings towards Audrey, was full of congratulations and

earned my eternal gratitude by giving me almost unlimited freedom during our brief visit.

But all things delightful must come to an end, and on the fourth evening of our stay there came a sudden eclipse of all satisfaction as far as I was concerned.

There was dancing that night in the Baron's Hall—one of the most magnificent rooms I have ever seen. All the wealth and beauty of the neighbourhood seemed gathered together beneath its vaulted roof, but Audrey with her child-like grey eyes and her wealth of golden-brown hair was the fairest of all the company—not the least of her charms being her wonderful simplicity. I heard one critical matron declare that for all her good looks she did not know how to use her charms and make the most of her advantages; but it was just in that very fact that her great charm lay. While other girls picked up a dozen coquettish tricks, and ogled every man they encountered, Audrey went on her way with the light-hearted ease of a child of six years old, heartily enjoying fun and frolic and without I am sure one vain or selfish thought. It was wonderful to me that everyone was not at her feet. But my luck was still in the ascendant; she gave me three dances, and afterwards for a while we sat together in one of the window seats chatting of trivial things, and letting the golden hours slip by in a way which I bitterly regretted when it was too late. How was I to know that fate in the person of Henry Brownrigg was climbing the stair, entering the hall, and at that very moment seeking me out?

I saw Audrey start a little, and glancing up saw the massive figure and handsome haughty features of the Under-Sheriff. He greeted Audrey effusively.

‘Yes, I have been able at last to overtake you,’ he said, favouring me with a curt nod. ‘The rumour seems to have been a false alarm after all. By the bye, Derwent, Sir Wilfrid is looking for you. A messenger

rode over to Keswick from Isel Hall just before I left and I was able to bring the letter on here. It seems that Lady Lawson is very ill.'

I hastened to join my patron and found that Henry Brownrigg's news was only too true. Sir Wilfrid was in great anxiety, and as it was a moonlight night and the roads in these parts were not so dangerous as in many other neighbourhoods, he had determined to lose no time but to press on at once.

So ended the happiest days of my life. Hastily taking leave of Audrey and her mother I hurried off to prepare for the journey, to change my black velvet costume for a sober travelling dress of brown tweed, to don a heavy frieze cloak warranted to keep the wearer warm even in our northern winter, and to pack Sir Wilfrid's possessions for him.

Sir Christopher took a kindly farewell of us and just at the last drew me aside to say in a low voice that he would not forget his promise to write to my father at the earliest opportunity. Then we rode out through the great door and across the drawbridge, and through the park with its bright stretches of white light and its inky shadows. The clock was striking ten when I turned to get one last look at the castle with its noble outlines, its orange-coloured lamps shining from every window, and its stately towers clearly defined against the pale sky. Would Audrey give a thought to me on this dreary night journey? Something told me she would; and I rode on, cold and tired, and chafing under the thought that our gala days had come to so sudden an end; yet beneath it all was that comforting assurance which kept with me like a living presence all through the night.

CHAPTER IX

It was with a sense of great content that Henry Brownrigg watched his rival disappear from the Baron's Hall. It was not easy any longer to despise Michael Derwent; he could not be bullied as in the old school days, and he had a way of entirely ignoring slights and snubs which recoiled upon the snubber, and was highly irritating. That the fellow had the presumption to love Audrey Radcliffe there was no doubt, but whether Audrey returned the feeling was fortunately quite uncertain, and Henry Brownrigg, who had his share of the wisdom of the serpent, checked the disparaging remark which was on his lips and made no allusion to Michael at all, but instead gave the girl an amusing account of the difficulties he had had to contend with in hunting up traces of the rumoured plot.

Audrey was interested and not a little flattered by his way of talking to her; empty compliments would not have pleased her at all, but she felt the subtle charm of being deferred to and consulted by a man who knew so much of the world; and whereas Michael had never been able to awaken in her anything but the most sisterly friendship, this older man, with his fine physique and his carefully drawn plan of campaign, was able to lay a most successful siege upon her heart.

Her pulses beat quickly when the following morning her mother called her aside just before the guests went to make ready for morning church.

'My child,' she said, 'Mr. Brownrigg has just asked

me to give you to him in marriage. Tell me the truth: could you love him as a husband?’

Audrey blushed and trembled.

‘I think I could, ma’am,’ she said, ‘and yet—oh mother! must I wed him yet? I do not think I can leave you.’

‘Dear child,’ said her mother, ‘there is no immediate haste, and indeed your marriage to such a man would be a great comfort to me. We cannot always be together, dear heart, and as you well know my health is but uncertain.’

‘Oh do not say that,’ said Audrey, tears rushing to her eyes, ‘I could never be happy without you, mother.’

Mrs. Radcliffe took the girl’s hand and held it caressingly.

‘Why, Audrey,’ she said, ‘it will not make me die a day sooner to speak of the possibility. And think what a load you will take from my heart if you can indeed accept Henry Brownrigg’s proposal of marriage. I should then be at rest about your future. But if I had to leave you in the old house with only your grandfather and Mr. Noel I should be anxious indeed for your well-being.’

‘Then I will accept this offer of marriage,’ said Audrey with great calmness, ‘only do not let there be any haste as to the ceremony. If we are betrothed you would then feel happy about me?’

‘Quite happy,’ said Mrs. Radcliffe, with a sigh of relief. ‘I will tell Mr. Brownrigg that he may speak with you after church. Run and dress quickly, my dear, or we shall keep the others waiting.’

Audrey in a whirl of excitement, half painful, half pleasureable, hastily put on her fur-bordered mantle and her broad, feathered hat; she also put on for the first time a dainty pair of French gloves which had been given to her at Christmas, and taking her large morocco-

bound prayer-book joined the other guests at the foot of the great staircase. She perceived directly that Henry Brownrigg was talking to Lady Vane, and stole a shy glance at her future husband who, in his purple coat, best lace cravat and huge periwig, looked a very fine gentleman indeed. Did she love him? Yes, there could certainly be no doubt as to that; she loved him with that blind admiration which is not the highest or the happiest form of love, but which, while it lasts, is undoubtedly most real.

Like one treading on air she walked through the park to Staindrop church and side by side with her lover paced up the path between the graves which led to the stately building where according to tradition Canute had once worshipped. It was rich in monuments of the Nevill family and Audrey found herself drawn by a sort of fascination to the tomb of the fifth Earl of Westmoreland who, with his first wife on one side of him and his second wife on the other, lay with upturned face awaiting the resurrection where 'they neither marry nor are given in marriage.'

There was a special thanksgiving for the happy settlement of the nation's great difficulties, and for the first time the names of the new King and Queen were introduced in the prayers, upon which a strange thrill seemed to pass through the congregation; but Audrey observed that one sturdy-looking old gentleman rose from his knees and closed his prayer-book with a resounding thud, upon which a small school-boy tittered and the beadle advancing with his staff of office gave the offending lad a tap on the head, and would evidently have enjoyed applying the staff to the knees of the old man.

Then followed the sermon, which it is to be feared Audrey did not hear at all, for her thoughts would keep wandering to the great event which was about to change her whole life.

She remembered how greatly Michael would dislike her marriage with one who had always failed to understand him, and she wondered whether she should be able to make her husband and her foster-brother the good friends she would fain have had them to be. It never once occurred to her that Michael's friendship had developed into love, nor did she dream that while she sat there in Staindrop church wondering whether the revelation as to his parentage would in itself be sufficient to make Henry Brownrigg adopt a different tone to him, Michael was riding towards Penrith treasuring up in his heart every word she had spoken to him at Raby Castle, and blind to the beauty of the landscape because of the inward vision of her face which continually haunted him.

At the close of the sermon they sang the metrical version of the 15th psalm, and Audrey thought in her mind how well the words applied to her lover.

Her confidence in Henry's generosity was boundless, but it was hard to say upon what she grounded it. Had she analysed her impressions—which needless to say she never did—she might possibly have found that his size had something to do with it. She was one of those girls who reverence mere physical bulk; Skiddaw was much more to her than Causey Pike because though less beautiful it was larger. She loved old Rollo the Mastiff because of his huge proportions, trusting him far more than Fritz the terrier. And she had an instinct that a man of Henry Brownrigg's build must be also large-minded and trustworthy.

Her heart beat fast with happy excitement when on the way back from church he confessed his love to her, and begged her to spare him a few minutes' private talk in the walled garden, that he might plead his cause.

They sat together in the very arbour in which she

had sat with Michael when, but a few days before, he had told her of Sir Christopher's revelation; where also, though she little guessed it, he had been on the point of telling her of his love, but had choked back the words, determined that he would bide his time and have at least a name to offer the woman he loved.

But Audrey had no leisure to think of her foster-brother at such a moment as this. For was not the man she loved and admired with her whole heart asking her to be his wife?

She did not keep him long waiting for his answer, and in her heart there lurked no faintest shadow of doubt as to their future happiness. To Henry's failings she was as yet altogether blind, and the mere fact that her mother liked him, and that Mr. Noel detested him, added piquancy to the whole affair and made her ready to champion him against all the world. Her heart burnt within her as she remembered that she had once heard Mr. Noel speak of him as an ambitious and selfish schemer. Well, there was a wise old proverb which said, 'We judge others by ourselves,' and Audrey, who was no saint but had her share of elfish delight in teasing and baffling and making sport out of those who had displeased her, looked forward with no slight pleasure to an encounter with her old tutor on their return to Lord's Island.

Henry Brownrigg, kneeling beside her, saw the swift changes in her expressive face and wondered what they betokened.

'What are your thoughts, sweetheart?' he said, raising her hand to his lips. 'Why do you frown?'

Audrey broke into a merry laugh.

'I was only thinking of my old tutor at home,—you know he was never one of your likers, but he will have to change his mind now.'

'That priest?' said Henry Brownrigg bitterly.

‘Don’t let him come betwixt us, Audrey, for heaven’s sake.’

‘Why, no, how could he do that?’ said Audrey confidently. ‘The day of his power has quite gone by; and depend upon it, when he really knows you he will like you.’

Henry Brownrigg shook his head.

‘Scarcely that, I think,’ he said with a bitter smile. ‘But after all we need not come across him much. When once we are wedded all will be well. I hate to think that till then you must be under a Papist’s roof.’

‘Why,’ said Audrey, a little startled at his tone. ‘How strangely you speak! You forget how dearly I love my grandfather. You speak of him as if he were no Christian! But it is because you do not know him. When you see how kind, how gentle, how full of charity he is you will not talk in that hard voice.’

Henry seemed about to speak but he checked himself and only smiled in a superior and rather patronizing way which in any other man Audrey would have deeply resented.

Just now, however, she was in the blind stage of love; and after all how was it likely that she should trouble herself about such matters when for the first time she felt her lover’s strong arm round her, when she heard him lavishing upon her every endearing epithet, and began faintly to realise what it means to love and to be loved.

Her face was radiant as they went slowly back together to the Castle, there to receive her mother’s tender and happy greeting and the congratulations of those who had had the pleasure of guessing beforehand that a betrothal was imminent.

Two days later, when the festivities at Raby came to an end, Audrey and her mother, attended of course by Henry Brownrigg, went on their homeward way as far as

Penrith, where, according to previous arrangements, they were to spend a few weeks with some of Mrs. Radcliffe's kinsfolk. The news of the betrothal was therefore sent to Lord's Island by a letter carried by one of the serving-men, a course which Mrs. Radcliffe greatly preferred to breaking the news herself to her father-in-law.

She wrote dutifully and courteously, but dwelt much on her satisfaction in seeing Audrey betrothed to one they had long known, a near neighbour, moreover, and one who held her own views as to religious matters.

It pained her to hurt one so kindly as old Sir Nicholas, but she must hold her own and bestow her daughter as she thought best and in accordance with what would have been her father's wishes. She had signed her name and was about to fold and seal the letter when an idea suddenly flashed into her mind, and taking up her pen once more she added a postscript.

'It may be well to let Michael Derwent know of the betrothal,' she wrote. 'Also all relatives and friends in the neighbourhood that come in your way.'

'I fear the lad cared for her,' she said to herself thoughtfully. 'Audrey never seemed even to guess at it, but there were many things which pointed that way. Well, he is young—he will get over it. Yet I am sorry for him nevertheless.'

But just then the church bells began to ring for service, and not unnaturally Mrs. Radcliffe's thoughts quickly left Michael Derwent and his trouble, and turned instead to a much more cheering idea. Wedding bells—the bells of St. Kentigern's at Crosthwaite were pealing gaily, and down the churchyard path walked Audrey and Henry Brownrigg.

CHAPTER X

Recollections of Michael Derwent

THAT Lady Lawson should have chosen that precise time for falling ill seemed to me hard lines, for to be forced to quit Raby Castle, to leave the coast clear for Henry Brownrigg just when my hopes were highest, seemed intolerable. As we rode on through the dismal night, I found myself wishing that my patron had been a less affectionate and anxious husband, or that he had been a rigid sabbatarian, when no doubt we should have remained until Monday as Sir Christopher's guests. Above all I wished myself a free agent, not a great man's secretary, and at thought of the small discomforts of the situation I fell to remembering the injury my father had done to me in leaving me all these years to the mercy of fate. How cruelly unfair was the treatment he had dealt out to me in the past! And was it likely that he would be willing now to remedy the wrong as far as might be, and own me as his heir? Sir Christopher Vane would doubtless do what he could to urge this course upon him, but was it wise to hope much from a parent who in the past had proved himself so cold-hearted and callous? Surely I had been a fool to hope anything from such a man.

Then back into my mind there came the remembrance of Audrey's words in the arbour, how she had argued in her tender womanly way that he might be only too glad of a chance of righting the great wrong he had

wrought years ago. And from her arguments I fell to thinking of the flush of excitement that had risen to her face, and the sweet sympathy of her eyes as I told her my tale. It was from such thoughts that Sir Wilfrid's laughing voice recalled me.

'Art asleep lad?' he asked turning towards me with a smile. 'Three times have I spoken and never an answer can I get.'

I stammered an apology, but he only laughed good-humouredly.

'Nay, lad, 'tis easy to see that you left your heart behind you at Raby. And in truth were I your age I should have done the same. As to that pragmatical and humourless Under-Sheriff, I scarce think you need fear him as a rival. The girl has surely wit enough to see through his pretensions, and to despise his vanity. Let us but unearth this father of yours, and get you your rights, and I would back you against ten Henry Brownriggs.'

There was something so comfortable and cheering in these words that my fears were for the time lulled, but when late on the Sunday we reached Penrith and after a hearty supper went to bed, the fates were less kind to me, and all night I was pursued by a horrid vision of the Under-Sheriff twice as big as he was in real life. Everywhere he followed me with that hateful superior smile of his, and everywhere he led Audrey like a child by the hand.

'Only one can win in this game,' he said to me with a sneer, 'and foundlings are handicapped.'

I raged at this, and could feel the blood tingling in my veins as in the old days at school when I had fought him. But what broke my heart was that Audrey turned and looked at me with her great grey eyes, and in them I read a sort of curiosity. 'How are you taking it?' the eyes seemed to say. 'Is it true, as my lover declares, that you really cared for me?'

At that I rushed away from both pursuers, and throwing myself down beside the Derwent—for always Borrowdale formed the back-ground of my dreams—I fell a-sobbing and so woke up, shaken and exhausted and a prey to the most deadly depression.

In very low spirits we went on our journey that Monday morning, but when we reached Isel Hall the presence of serious illness in the household drove out every other thought; indeed for days it was impossible to think of anything but of the shadow of death that hung over us like a pall. On the Thursday, however, this anxiety abated. Lady Lawson began to mend and the doctor no longer waited long hours in the house as though expecting a deadly combat with the foe he was always trying to cheat of his prey, but rode back cheerfully to Cockermouth to see how it fared with his other patients.

By the Friday morning we had settled down into the ordinary routine of work, and I was doing accounts in the library while Sir Wilfrid at the other side of the table was busy over some legal documents when a servant entered and handed me a letter. I had not so many correspondents that I could long remain in doubt as to whom the letter was from, and indeed Mr. Noel's handwriting was well known to me.

I don't know what instinct warned me, but in an instant I knew that the letter contained news of Audrey's betrothal to Henry Brownrigg. My heart seemed all at once to turn to stone; mechanically I broke the seal and read the letter. It was short and ran as follows:—

‘MY DEAR MICHAEL:

I regret to say that we have received a letter from Penrith in which Mrs. Radcliffe tells Sir Nicholas that her daughter was betrothed to Mr. Brownrigg on Sunday last at Raby Castle. The marriage is highly distasteful to Sir Nicholas but he has

no power to forbid it. I am anxious to see you if you are able to visit Lord's Island within the next fortnight, and you will find us quite at leisure, for Mrs. Radcliffe will remain for two or possibly three weeks with her kinsfolk at Penrith. Sir Nicholas begs to be remembered to Sir Wilfrid Lawson.

I remain, yours faithfully,

AUGUSTINE NOEL.

Written at Lord's Island, Derwentwater.

TO MR. MICHAEL DERWENT,
Care of SIR WILFRID LAWSON,
At Isel Hall, near Cockermouth.'

I folded the letter, and taking up my quill began to write on a scrap of paper that lay near me. To go on with my patron's accounts was at that moment out of the question, yet the act of mechanically writing down any words which came to hand, helped me to control myself, kept me from yielding to that passion of despair which sweeps from the man who abandons himself to it all faith, all hope, all power of endurance. 'That way madness lies.'

There was it is true not much sense in the disjointed letters and words I forced my pen to write on that blank sheet of paper, but for the time they availed, they tided me over the first horrible moments of agony, and gave me time to rally. After a while I found myself writing down some words of Shakspeare's which—I know not why—had floated through my brain.

'Love give me strength! and strength shall help afford.'

To this thought of strength I clung like a drowning man to a plank. This disastrous love of mine which, it seemed, had been all a mistake, should not drag me down into those depths of despair and ruin which threatened to close above my head; I would wrest from it a strength which might yet fit me to serve Audrey in some far future. And with increasing steadiness I

wrote again and again the words, '*Love give me strength!*' as though they had been a charm.

'You have had news?' said Sir Wilfrid, glancing at me.

I handed him Mr. Noel's letter, and was grateful for his silence. When at length he did speak it was not to make any comment on the letter but to send me up to the withdrawing room on some errand—a task which I was glad enough to execute, though as I went up the long slippery flight of polished wooden steps I had an odd feeling that my limbs were not my own.

Gaining the head of the staircase I started back, for coming to meet me I saw what for a moment I took to be a wraith. It was the figure of a young man dressed in brown and wearing a brown periwig; his face was quite colourless, his pale lips were set in a straight line, his eyes seemed as though they had looked into hell.

The next moment I saw with a shock of astonishment that the wraith was nothing but my own reflection in a tall mirror that hung from the wall.

'You shall at any rate play your part better than that!' I muttered, with an angry glance at the reflection. 'Is it for you to be looking like a love-sick swain in a penny ballad, when in half an hour you must be dining with all the household?'

The thought of the smoking joint on the board made my stomach turn, and the dread of the curious eyes sent a cold shudder through me. But where was the use of stopping to think of such things? I delivered Sir Wilfrid's message and went down once more to him in the library.

'I have a letter for the Vicar of Crosthwaite,' said my patron, glancing at me quickly as I took my place at the writing-table. 'It will be as well, I think, if you ride over with it this afternoon. You can sleep at Herbert's Isle and bring me back word as to the damage done by

Tuesday's storm. This summer, if all is well, I think of enlarging the house there; you can talk matters over with the steward.'

I thanked him, and asked if there was any more writing to be done.

'Nothing more now,' he replied. 'Start when you please; and look you, Michael! go and have a talk with that old tutor of yours, for he is a shrewd man. If I were you I would tell him all that you learnt from Sir Christopher Vane.'

I promised to do so and hurried away to my room in the pele tower, there to make ready for the ride to Keswick.

Never had man a more kindly patron, and I knew well enough that the errand to Crosthwaite and the confabulations with the steward might very well have waited. It was nothing more than a device to give me a breathing space in which to regain my bearings.

The pele tower was by far the most ancient part of Isel Hall; it stood at one corner of the battlemented house and my room was in the upper part of it. It was but sparsely furnished, but whatever it contained of interest was in some way associated with Audrey Radcliffe. Here I kept my few worldly possessions—the birds' eggs we had collected together as children; the books we had shared; and one or two trifles of needlework wrought by her hands years ago. Looking back now it seemed to me that there had never been a time in my life when I had not loved her; she had been mine from the beginning, mine years and years before this Under-Sheriff had ever seen her. Who was he that he should come betwixt us now?

At that thought pain changed to a blind hatred and resentment that by contrast seemed for the time a relief. I hurried down the tower stairs at a headlong pace, saddled my horse and rode swiftly away from Isel with the

thought of Henry Brownrigg ever present in my mind. Had she given herself to one more worthy of her I might have borne it patiently, but that she should have been caught by the wiles of a man of fine presence and handsome features, seemed intolerable. For well I knew that Henry Brownrigg's mind was of the narrowest, that all his petty prejudices would ere long irritate her large-minded nature, that his insufferable conceit and fussiness would chafe Audrey as nothing else could have done. Respectable he might be, but it was with the heartless Pharisaical respectability that only repulses, and it sickened me to think that Audrey should be tied for life to such an one.

We were past Cockermouth now, and as we galloped along by the shore of Bassenthwaite, the fresh air and the exercise invigorated me, yet at the same time seemed to fan the fire of raging hatred that burned in my heart. My chief hope was that he might have returned to Millbeck Hall, that we might casually meet, and that I might have the chance of picking a quarrel with him and calling him out. It would surely not be hard to find some pretext for fighting? I knew his haunts in Keswick pretty well, and that evening I would do my best to make a duel inevitable.

Having left Sir Wilfrid's letter at the Crosthwaite Vicarage I turned my horse's head towards the little market town, still brooding over my schemes with regard to Henry Brownrigg, when suddenly a mischievous lad in a smock frock leapt out of the hedge with a shrill war-whoop which terrified Hotspur and sent him tearing down the lane at full gallop. I had been riding carelessly with slack reins and now found it impossible to stop the horse. On we rushed at lightning speed, when to my horror I saw a little troop of children fling out of a dame-school at the side of the road; they paused and looked with stupefied faces at the runaway horse;

in another moment we should be upon them. With a desperate effort I dragged at the right rein and put Hotspur at the hedge; he just cleared it, while I lost my seat and was thrown violently to the ground. How long I lay there stunned I have no idea, probably not many minutes, but I seemed to wake up in a quite unknown world.

I was lying on a smooth lawn in a garden; close by, a very neat, box-edged path led through a vista of bare and gnarled apple-trees, and walking up the path came a soberly dressed old gentleman whose face was the most peaceful it has ever been my lot to see.

‘I must have died,’ I thought to myself; ‘these must be the “gardens and the gallant walks” the hymn speaks of. That is how men look in heaven, quiet and kindly and with no shadow of care and self-seeking; yet the cut of his doublet might be better, there’s room for improvement there.’

The man with the peaceful face had drawn near by this time; he did not raise his hat or salute me in any way whatever, but just bent down and looked into my face. As for me I was still too much bewildered to wish to move or speak.

‘Friend,’ he said at last, ‘wilt thou walk to my house and rest? or shall I send for my servants to carry thee?’

I sat up, then with some difficulty struggled to my feet, not feeling any pain but with a strange dizziness in my head. Perhaps this was the natural effect of waking in a quite different world.

My new friend drew my arm into his, and we walked down the trimly-kept path under the apple trees; the box bordering seemed natural enough, but beyond it there grew some curious yellow and puce-coloured plants, that I had never seen before; it seemed to me wonderful that such fair flowers should bloom so early in the year; till I remembered that I was in a place

where time had ceased to exist. This thought, and also perhaps the moving, made my brain feel in a whirl; my eyes grew dim so that I could only leave it to my companion to guide me.

He led me into a house and made me lie down on a couch, where being still giddy and shaken I was glad enough to stay quietly. It was not apparently the custom in this place to ply one with questions, and there was a strange restfulness in the man's friendly silence.

'Take this cordial,' he said to me after a timeless interval, during which I had lain with closed eyes, basking as it were in the quiet.

I took the silver cup he placed in my hand and thanked him.

'The horse is not injured,' he remarked, 'my servant has put it in the stable, so be at rest on that point.'

The cordial had revived me, and now these startling words thoroughly roused me, for somehow I had never fancied that dear old Hotspur would go to heaven.

'What has happened, sir?—I thought I was out of the world—yet you speak of the horse?' I stammered, looking in perplexity at my friend. 'What is this place? and how did I come here, sir?'

'The place is Hye Hill, and I am Nathaniel Radcliffe, one of the Society of Friends. Walking in my garden this afternoon I heard in the road sounds as of a runaway horse and the shouting of many voices; then over my hedge leapt a chestnut steed, and its rider was flung with violence on to my lawn.'

'I hope Hotspur did no mischief to your garden, sir?' I said. 'I put him at the hedge to save the children in the lane who were too much scared to get out of the way.'

'He did no harm, for the gardener quickly caught him, but I fear, my friend, thou thyself art more injured than at first we thought. I see thou art suffering great pain.'

I could not reply, for it took all my manhood to strangle the sobs that rose in my throat. As long as I live I shall never forget the horrible revulsion of feeling that overwhelmed me as I realised that I was back in this dreary world in which all things seemed going so hopelessly wrong.

The Quaker put his hand on mine, probably to feel the pulse and judge of my state. His cool quiet touch had something soothing in it, and I gripped his hand hard in a way which must, I think, have astonished him.

‘Have patience,’ he said. ‘The sharpest pain cannot last long; God allows long aches but only short agonies.’

I wondered if his words applied to mental pain as well as bodily, he looked like a man who had lived through both, and this gave his sayings a curious force. Perhaps that is why the prophets of old, nay of all ages, have led such troubled lives. They could not tell forth the truth with any force till they had lived through much tribulation. It was suffering that fitted them for the goodly fellowship of the prophets.

‘I will send for a surgeon, maybe he could relieve thee,’ said the Quaker.

For answer I broke into a wild fit of laughter, which was discourteous, but for the life of me I could not help it.

I struggled to my feet and paced the room like one possessed.

‘Why, sir, what could a leech do for me?’ I cried. ‘It is no bodily pain I feel. It is the torture of being in this hateful world when I thought I was well out of it. It’s the torture of knowing that a rival whom I hate and despise is to win and keep and drag down to his own level the best and the most beautiful woman in all Cumberland. She little knows what he really is or she would never dream of wedding him. But I’ll not live to see her ruin her happiness; somehow I can surely

pick a quarrel with him. He is a better swordsman than I—but I shall at least have the pleasure of fighting him.'

'Wouldst thou break one of Christ's commandments, to gratify thy carnal lust?' said the Quaker gravely.

'Christ would never approve of this marriage!' I said vehemently.

'Maybe that is true,' replied Nathaniel Radcliffe; 'indeed if thou dost refer to the marriage of which I heard some rumour to-day betwixt my young kinswoman Audrey Radcliffe and the Under-Sheriff I incline to agree with thee. Little true happiness is like to come of such a union.'

'You are her kinsman, sir, I had forgot that. I remember now to have heard that you were at length released from gaol by King James. I saw you years ago at Cockermouth when all the people were hooting the Quakers.'

'Why, then thou art most like the lad that didst lay hold of Barton's stick to save my pate,' said the Quaker with a smile. 'Long ago as it is I recall thy face and am glad to see thee again. I trust that the days of persecution are at an end. They were hard to endure, as hard perchance as this pain that now tries thee so grievously, but we have grown strong through them, and so mayst thou, my friend, an thou wilt follow the guidance of the Spirit, and hold down thy brute instincts.'

'If you knew the Under-Sheriff's overbearing arrogance, sir, you would long to fight him yourself,' I said hotly. 'It might put off the marriage, moreover, for he is so good a swordsman that he would most likely make worm's meat of me, and Audrey would scarce wed the murderer of her foster-brother.'

He laid his hand on my shoulder and drew me back once more to the couch.

'Rest, my friend, and quietly think what thy words

truly mean. Do nothing rashly, but wait for the leading of the Spirit.'

I think if he had preached at me I should have scoffed, or if he had argued with me I should have rushed from the house, but when he drew me back into that attitude of repose, and sat down himself at a little distance in an old high-backed chair, there was something in the extreme gentleness of his manner that I could not resist. There was absolute silence in the room save for the ticking of the tall eight-day clock, and the gentle flickering of the flames on the hearth. I wondered vaguely if my companion would speak. Should we stay there for hours in this extraordinary silence? What was the good of it all? How cruelly it contrasted with the tumult of my mind, with the angry heat of the blood that pricked and throbbed in my veins. My eyes rested on the fine face of Nathaniel Radcliffe and for a time I forgot my own misery in wondering how a man though pale and emaciated by the unhealthy life he had led in prison could yet bear such an extraordinary look of serenity and peace. I shall never forget the expression of calm, patient waiting that was on his face. Most clearly he expected an inner voice to speak to him. And after all what could be more natural? Does God command us to pray and then intend that we shall spare not a minute to listen to what he will say to us? Of the duties of prayer and praise I had been taught ever since I was a child, but no one had said a word about waiting for the guidance of the Inner Light.

Well, we naturally tend to follow the example of those we are with, and the influence of that calm, serene old man had much weight with me. I, too, began to wait expectantly. By degrees the angry heat died out of me, and I reflected with a gleam of satisfaction that Nathaniel Radcliffe had agreed with me that Christ could

hardly approve of this proposed marriage. Would He not then bring it to naught? That might or might not be, for evils were unquestionably for a time permitted; 'short agonies,' as the Quaker had called them, certainly found place in this sad world which I would so gladly have quitted. I fell to waiting again, but for a long, long time nothing came to me, only I was conscious of the slow ticking of the clock in the corner. I could almost have smiled, for to my fancy the pendulum seemed to beat time to the words, 'Choose well,' 'Choose well.'

The words seemed a mockery. What choice was left me? This hideous bit of suffering had been thrust into my life and somehow I had to endure it.

Then back into my mind flashed the line from Shakspeare which had come to me that morning at Isel: '*Love give me strength, and strength shall help afford.*' I began to see that there was a weak way and a strong way of bearing this heavy blow,—that it might cripple and mar my life or, if I would, might make me strong with a strength which does not come to those who live lapped in ease. What if I could come out of this fiery furnace as Nathaniel Radcliffe had come out of his long imprisonment?

The thing that happened then I cannot explain, but suddenly all the pain and tumult in my heart was hushed. An inner stillness, like the outer stillness of the room, fell upon me, and out of this heavenly calm a voice spoke in my heart,—spoke the words that ended my desolation, and gave me the leading I craved, that comforted even the old soreness as to my birth.

It seemed to me a miracle when, a few minutes later, Nathaniel Radcliffe quietly rose to his feet and repeated the very words that had been spoken to me.

His manner was slow and gentle; he seemed like a child repeating a message as he began,—

“*I have called thee by thy name. Thou art mine.*” It is laid upon me to speak these words to thee, friend, and to bid thee be loyal to Him whose love is the unfailing fount of strength.’

Then he sat down again in the high-backed chair and stillness fell upon us once more. But the wish for vengeance and the craving for death had died out of me, and I stood on the threshold of a new life.

CHAPTER XI

ON the Saturday morning, as Sir Nicholas Radcliffe rose from the table at the end of breakfast, his chaplain put a question to him. Throughout the meal there had been silence, for the old knight was in the lowest of spirits, and the priest's busy brain had been at work on an interesting problem.

'Sir,' he said, 'is your brother Mr. John Radcliffe still in France?'

'He spoke in his last letter of coming to England in the spring,' said Sir Nicholas, 'and by this time he may be in London for aught I know.'

'Might it not be well that he should know this news as to Mistress Audrey's betrothal?' said the priest. '"Tis a matter that cannot be without interest to him.'

'True,' said Sir Nicholas, 'since he will succeed at my death, he has doubtless a right to know the unwelcome news. I would that he or any man had the power to forbid the match.'

The priest's shrewd, kindly face was over-clouded now; the thought of Audrey's marriage to Henry Brownrigg was abhorrent to him for many reasons. He was really fond of his pupil and was grieved to think of the life she was likely to lead with a man so overbearing and selfish as the Under-Sheriff. Then, too, he sincerely desired her marriage with the son of Sir Francis Salkeld, a Catholic gentleman of good position and excellent character. And deep down in his heart there was one thought keenly painful to a really good man,

and that was that—his lips being silenced by the knowledge that he had gained in the confessional—he was obliged to keep quiet, and see one for whom he had real affection placed in a most unfair position, and rendered now utterly useless in the game. He was heartily sorry for Michael, who by some perverse fate seemed always to be the one to get the worst of things, and through no fault of his own to pay the penalty of other people's sins and mistakes.

The question as to Mr. John Radcliffe's return to England had been prompted by a strong desire both to check the Brownrigg marriage and to help Michael to his rights, but no one knew better than the priest how difficult the course he proposed to steer would probably prove. For many years, the whole truth as to Michael's parentage had been known to him, and again and again he had been forced to act a living lie. Long ago John Radcliffe had in confession revealed to him all the details of his first marriage, the death of his wife at Watendlath and his own abandonment of the child in Borrowdale. At that time Mr. Noel had been living in London and it was not till the so-called Popish plot had driven numbers of Catholics into hiding that he left his work in the south of England and found shelter with old Sir Nicholas Radcliffe on Derwentwater. Here, in Audrey's little foster-brother, the Borrowdale foundling, he speedily recognised John Radcliffe's deserted child, and though his lips were necessarily sealed he wrote most urgently to Michael's father, strongly counselling him to acknowledge his son.

His letters however proved of no avail. John Radcliffe had escaped to France and saw no reason to burden himself with any additional trouble or expense; moreover he shrank from the reproaches of his second wife and her kinsfolk, and determined to let things be. The priest now began to think that it would be well to

undertake a journey to London to seek out the heir to the estate and to rouse him to a sense of his duty in this matter. He hoped that when all was made public and Henry Brownrigg realised that Audrey would not succeed to the Goldrill estate on the death of her great-uncle he would readily consent to abandon the proposed alliance with the Radcliffes, and in that case either Michael's union with Audrey might solve the difficulty and end matters happily, or Audrey could be married to the heir of Sir Francis Salkeld, as proved best and most desirable for the general good.

He was pacing up and down in the garden, still musing over these schemes, when he was startled to see the figure of Michael himself at the further end of the path. The priest had time as he approached to take in every detail of his appearance. He looked years older than when they had last met, but notwithstanding his pallor and the unmistakeable signs of a great struggle passed through, there was something vigorous and strong in his bearing which delighted the priest. He had had to deal with many love-sick youths in his time, but had never come across one who met his troubles precisely in this fashion.

'You are early at Derwentwater!' he exclaimed with a cheery greeting. 'Hast had my letter?'

'Yes, sir, it reached Isel yesterday,' said Michael, and his voice betrayed more than his face, for it had a curious note in it that is only heard in the voice of one who suffers. 'I should have seen you last night, for I rode into Crosthwaite with a letter from Sir Wilfrid Lawson, but I was thrown from my horse and stunned, so got no further than Keswick.'

'None the worse, I hope,' said the priest, 'though now I look at you 'tis clear you have had a shaking. I hear, by the bye, from Sir Nicholas that you had good news while you were at Raby Castle.'

‘Good news?’ said Michael, looking bewildered, for it seemed to him a mockery to speak of anything being good just then.

‘Ay, to be sure,’ said the priest cheerfully; ‘Mrs. Radcliffe said in her letter that Sir Christopher Vane knew of your parentage, and that all doubt as to your having been born in wedlock was at an end.’

‘Yes,’ said Michael, ‘that is clear, but I don’t know that the knowledge will avail much.’

‘Nonsense,’ said the priest. ‘It may avail you more than you think and you should leave no stone unturned to get at further evidence and to learn the whole truth. What did you hear from Sir Christopher?’

Michael repeated what had passed between them.

‘I have a notion,’ he said, ‘that from the description he gave it must have been up at Watendlath that I was born. He spoke of coming down into Borrowdale at night, and that he had much difficulty in making his way to the left to a farm where they had stabled the horses. That fits in with what we already know as to the two gentlemen who left their horses at Longthwaite; and in the meantime my father must have walked along towards the Bowder stone till he came to the place where I was found by Sir Wilfrid and Dickon.’

‘If I were you,’ said the priest, ‘I would go to Watendlath and see what you can discover from the good folk up there. What do you say to making a day of it among the hills? Nothing could clear your brain better after your tumble of yesterday. Come, go out with me. We will walk first to Seathwaite where I have to visit a sick man, and afterwards we will work our way up to Watendlath and learn what we can as to the past.’

Michael fell in very readily with this plan, and was grateful to his old tutor for the discreet silence he preserved as to Audrey. He tried hard to rouse himself

into taking interest in the research which had once meant so much to him, but all his future had become blank and empty; he could only hold fast to the thought that had come to him at Hye Hill the day before, that his life belonged to One who was actually within him, and that through weal and through woe he had to follow the guidance of that Inner Light.

The walk would have been a silent one had it depended on Michael to find topics for conversation, but the priest with rare skill and kindness kept up a cheery flow of such chat as he thought best suited to draw his pupil away from dwelling over much on his troubles. He talked of his own youth, of his training at St. Omer, of his life in London, of adventures that had befallen him as he crossed the Alps years ago in a pilgrimage to Rome. So that it was not until they had reached Seathwaite, and Michael was left for an hour to his own devices, that he had much leisure for remembrance. The cloud quickly fell upon him then, however, and as he wandered on to the foot of the Styhead Pass everything in the landscape seemed to harmonise only too well with the utter dreariness that oppressed him. The grey amphitheatre of rugged hills, the foaming white stream which he had crossed lower down in the valley, the stunted, leafless mountain-ash tree which seemed the only living thing within sight, made a picture that for desolation could hardly have been surpassed. He threw himself on the rocks by a tiny waterfall that went splashing down beside the mountain-ash; the dull aching at his heart seemed to creep all over his physical frame as he rested his throbbing head on the grey boulder nearest him. He wondered whether Jacob had felt half as desolate and weary on that night long ago when the stones had been his pillow.

Presently he fell asleep, and like Jacob dreamed a dream. Some one bent over him and kissed him on the

forehead, and looking up quickly he saw the face that he had learnt to know so well from the miniature—his mother's face. Its tender yet strong sympathy seemed to fill him with new energy.

‘Your work awaits you!’ she said, and he started up from sleep and looked round in a bewildered way.

The vision had faded, only in the bare mountain-ash tree there was a robin singing its cheerful morning song, and revelling in a brief gleam of sunshine which swept over the gloomy grey of the hills.

He had no notion how long he had been asleep, and fearing to keep Mr. Noel beyond the appointed time he went back to Seathwaite, his mind still haunted by the loveliness of the face he had just seen.

The priest did not keep him waiting but came promptly out of the little stone cottage where the sick man lived, directly his step was heard without.

‘I shall have to leave you to go to Watendlath alone,’ he said. ‘For Jo Milburn is in a critical state and his wife worn out with watching. I cannot leave them yet.’

And so it chanced that Michael made his way alone up from Rosthwaite to Watendlath and, early in the afternoon, climbed the steps leading to the door of Wilson's farm and knocked for admittance. There was little journeying about in these days, and as often as not people in the next hamlet did not know each other. Although Watendlath was such a short distance from the place where Michael had spent the greater part of his life he had never before seen the face of the elderly woman in clean white mutch and snowy kerchief who opened the door to him and inquired what he needed.

His tale was soon told, and Mary Wilson, who had listened in silence to all that he had heard at Raby, gave an exclamation of heartfelt interest and recognition as he showed her the miniature.

All her caution and northern reserve were scattered by the sight.

'Aw to be sure! 'T is the bonnie leddy hersel'. An' you are as like her, sir, as like can be, and reet glad am I to think that no mischance befell ye the night the gentleman carried ye off in such haste.'

'Did you ever learn his name?' asked Michael, eagerly.

'No, sir, though I asked the leddy mair then once, but she just shook her head. And after she had deed and you were carried off I called after the gentleman to ask him, but the wind was blawin', and awa in the distance cam' the sound of the "bar-foot stag" and the hounds, and I was forced to shut the door.'

'It was at night then?' asked Michael.

'Oh, ay, sir! and I niver fairly saw the gentleman's face, he was in sair haste, and after going in to see the corp' he just bade me wrap a cloak about ye, and laid some gold on the table for the buryin' and was gone before I reetly knew what he was about. . . . Ill fitted was he to tak' care of a babe, or a wife either for that matter. And the bonny leddy vowed with her last breath that she was his true weddit wife, though 't was plain to see that he'd broke his vows and had done nowt to comfort and cherish her. But there! Mony a man will swear those words glib enoo' in kirk, and niver give the matter a thought agin. They wouldna treat a horse with as little care as their ain weddit wife often enoo'. There's ain thing ye should have, sir,' she added, going to an oaken chest and searching diligently among its contents. 'When we cam' to make the leddy ready for her buryin' we found this.'

She handed to him a copy of the '*Imitation of Christ*,' and, eagerly opening it, Michael read the inscription on the flyleaf.

'Lucy Carleton. Her Booke. Penrith. 1666.'

‘Why, here is the name clearly enough!’ he exclaimed, reading the words aloud.

‘Mappen that would be her maiden name,’ said the shrewd north country woman. ‘’T was in the summer of the year 1668 as I mind weel that she died in this hoose, an’ she told me her ain sel’ she had but been ten months weddit. God forgive me! I doubted her at first and thought ’t was just the auld story over agin of a young girl an’ a braw faced man that had deceived her; but I never doubted after she deed. There was truth—God’s truth in her look as she said her last words, an’ the strength of her I shall niver forget, for it frightened me in one just passin’ awa. She made a beautiful corp’, sir. You wad like mebbe to see the room yonder; ’t was in there she deed.’

Michael felt a choking sensation in his throat as he glanced round the room.

‘And her husband? what of him?’ he asked. ‘What sort of man was he?’

‘Aboot your ain height, sir, he was, an’ as I think with light hair, but he kept his face well-nigh hidden. As for me I thought him stern and hard, but belike ’t was the shock of seein’ his wife dead. An’ angry I was with him for takin’ the laal barn—that’s you, sir—oot into the cauld. Howiver there was no gainsayin’ him; he was off wid the babe under his cloak before I could rightly understand that he meant it in sober earnest, and nowt more have I heard or seen of him since.’

‘Where was my mother buried?’ asked Michael.

‘Over at Wythburn, sir. ’T was the way they had travelled from, and my husband he made inquiries but could learn nowt. They had been just travellers passin’ through the country, foreign to these parts, I take it.’

This was all that Michael could gather, and having

thanked Mary Wilson, and accepted the meal she hospitably offered him, he tramped down to Derwentwater once more, and, borrowing a boat from Mounsey, the miller of Lowdore, rowed himself out to Sir Wilfrid's summer house on St. Herbert's Isle.

CHAPTER XII

AUDREY RADCLIFFE had in the meantime been passing a very quiet interval at Penrith with her mother's kinsfolk. The first excitement of her betrothal was over and she had settled down into a state of dreamy content, liking well enough to work at the store of new garments which her mother was helping her to prepare, and wondering in her own heart whether in their old age she and Henry Brownrigg would be as quarrelsome a couple as her great-aunt and great-uncle Aglionby.

Surely Henry could never so flatly contradict her, or adopt Uncle Aglionby's invariable retort—

‘Nonsense, madam, you know nothing whatever about it; ply your needle and hold your tongue.’

If he did, could she have had the patience to go on meekly making his shirt, while he blundered over some detail which a woman with her quicker insight would have had the skill to avoid? Certainly Aunt Aglionby revenged herself by most withering remarks when her husband was ruefully obliged to admit himself mistaken. There was something indescribably irritating about her smile and her—‘Just as I told you, sir.’

Still the old people were fond of each other after a fashion, and apart they would have been utterly miserable; but Audrey, who had seen scarcely anything of married life, began to perceive that it was not all unmixed bliss, and that even these old kinsfolk who had lived together for fifty years had still to make large allowance for each other's little infirmities. She was

sitting one morning in the parlour busy with a piece of fine embroidery when her mother entered with an open letter in her hand.

‘I have heard from an old friend of my mother’s, Audrey,’ she said, ‘a Mrs. Simpson who is visiting her kinsman, Mr. Carleton, not far from Penrith. She has but just heard of our being in the neighbourhood, and Mr. Carleton’s coach waits below to take us back to visit them. Put on your best sacque, child, and let us come at once, for the horses must not be kept waiting in this cold east wind.’

‘Who is Mr. Carleton, ma’am?’ asked Audrey, glancing towards the hearth where Aunt Aglionby was busy with her spinning wheel.

‘He lives at Carleton Manor, a mile from Penrith,’ said the old lady. ‘But he is a strange-tempered old gentleman and crippled with gout; the Simpsons are the only visitors who ever stay at the manor now.’

‘Did not his daughter and heiress marry Thomas Simpson?’ asked Mrs. Radcliffe.

‘To be sure she did; they had her safely wedded when she was but a child of fourteen lest she should follow the example of her elder sister,’ said Mrs. Aglionby. ‘The poor old man has never got over that scandal.’

Audrey would have liked to stay and hear more, for Aunt Aglionby seemed in a chatty mood, but she was obliged to hasten away and dress, and though she had intended to ask her mother what the scandal was that had so disturbed old Mr. Carleton she forgot all about it when they were rattling along in the cumbrous old coach, nor did it recur to her mind until Mrs. Simpson, a pleasant-looking elderly lady, led her into the room where, half lost in a huge grandfather chair with cushioned sides and arms to it, sat a withered, wrinkled old

man in a purple coat, with his gouty foot on a leg-rest, and that ominous single upright line between the eyes which betokens a stormy temper.

He received Mrs. Radcliffe with an effort at courtesy, but either a twinge of gout or some painful memory made him glare at Audrey as she curtseyed in response to his slight bow.

‘What! madam!’ he said, turning to Mrs. Radcliffe, ‘do I understand that your daughter has arrived at this age and is not yet married? That’s a mistake—a great mistake.’

‘Audrey is betrothed to Mr. Brownrigg the Under-Sheriff,’ said Mrs. Radcliffe, amazed, but secretly amused, at this very plain speaking.

‘Get her married quick, madam,’ growled the old man. ‘Delays are dangerous. I would have all maids wedded at fourteen, before they have time to get foolish notions in their heads or try to take the bit between their teeth.’

Here Mrs. Simpson contrived to put in a word which turned the conversation, and soon after the butler announced that dinner was served. The meal proved a long and very dull function and Audrey sighed with relief when they returned to the cooler atmosphere of the withdrawing room. Here a pretty little boy of seven years old joined them, Mrs. Simpson’s small grandson, Tom; and Audrey, who could always make herself happy with children, soon induced the little fellow to cast aside his stiff company manner and to chatter away freely.

‘Show your doves to Miss Radcliffe, Tom,’ said his grandmother, not unwilling to get rid of the two younger members of the family and to enjoy a quiet talk with Mrs. Radcliffe.

And Audrey, willingly enough, went off hand in hand with the child, who led her into a far away wing where

in the big deserted nursery his wicker cage of doves occupied the wide window-seat.

‘Did you bring this big cage with you from home?’ asked Audrey.

‘No, the doves live here,’ said the child. ‘But every year I come here and see them, sometimes with my mother, sometimes with grandmother. I should like it if it weren’t for the ghost.’

Audrey laughed merrily.

‘Why, Tom, there are no such things as ghosts,’ she said. ‘Come! I am sure you never saw one.’

‘No,’ said the child doubtfully, ‘I don’t think it comes into the house, but Betty—that’s the housemaid—she says that any night you may see her walking in the pleasance and crying!’

‘See Betty?’ said Audrey mischievously.

‘No, see the ghost,’ said the child with wide eyes.

‘Who is she?’

‘Well,’ said Tom, lowering his voice, ‘don’t say I told you, for they think I don’t know, they always do think I don’t know things—but it is my mother’s sister, Lucy—I b’lieve she was a very wicked woman—that’s why we must never say her name, Betty says—though all the same I think Betty is very sorry for her. She disobeyed grandfather, and no one ever dares do that—I can’t think how she dared do it. Betty said that rather than marry Sir James Grey, who was always drunk by two in the afternoon, she ran away from home. Betty’s mother was a servant here then and she told her. You come here and I’ll show you something.’

Audrey allowed herself to be led along a corridor at the end of which Tom unbolted a door and took her into an empty room. Not an atom of furniture was in it, but leaning against the wainscot with its face to the wall there stood a large picture.

‘This was Aunt Lucy’s bedroom,’ whispered the child,

‘and after she ran away my grandfather had it all stripped like this, and he made them take down her picture from the dining room and had it put away in here with its face to the wall.’

‘And what makes you fancy that she walks still in the garden?’ said Audrey.

‘They have seen her,’ said the child in an awe-struck voice. ‘Her ghost walks up and down under the trees in the pleasance, just as Betty’s mother saw her doing the afternoon when my grandfather said she should marry Sir James whether she liked it or not. She walked to and fro crying, for hours, they say, and in the morning when they came here to wake her up, the room was empty and the window wide open; she had got out in the night by this tree that grows close by.’

Audrey went to look at the tree and reflected that the girl must have been desperate indeed before she took such a leap. Then she stooped down and looked at the name painted on the back of the picture.

Lucy Carleton. Anno Domini 1666, ætat 15.

Strong curiosity to see the face of the heroine of this strange romance suddenly seized her. She carefully turned the picture round, rather to the horror of little Tom, who gripped fast hold of her dress, curious, too, yet full of an inexplicable dread at the thought of seeing the face of the ghost.

Flicking off the dust with her handkerchief, Audrey saw that the picture represented a young girl sitting in a conventional attitude on a grassy slope, in a white satin dress much more suited to a ball-room. At her feet two little King Charles spaniels played with a ball, but when, raising her hand to dust the higher part of the picture, Audrey was able to make out the features distinctly, she gave a stifled exclamation of astonishment. For in that familiar short face with its healthy colouring, its finely moulded mouth and chin, its dazzlingly

bright hazel eyes and soft brown curls, she at once recognised the face painted in the miniature which she and Michael had discovered in Borrowdale. Here at last was fresh evidence as to Michael's parentage, and she hastily turned over in her mind the plan she had best adopt. It would hardly do to speak of the discovery downstairs, she must at any rate consult with her mother first, and with another long look at the picture she turned it once more with its face to the wall, and hand in hand with Tom returned to the nursery.

'You could not be afraid of such a sweet-looking ghost as that,' she said, glancing at the child.

'N—no,' said Tom doubtfully. 'I'm somehow glad she was fond of dogs.'

That was a human touch and gave him a fellow feeling for the poor ghost. 'I wish she had the dogs with her when she walks,' he said. 'But she doesn't. They say she is always crying, and crying, as if her heart would break.'

Audrey was silent; the mournful cooing of the doves in the cage seemed to harmonise only too well with the sad story of poor Lucy. Could it really be true that she was unable to rest but still returned to her old home, haunting the place where she had suffered so much?

'I wonder why she walks?' said Tom. 'Is it because my grandfather never forgave her?'

'I don't know,' said Audrey musingly. 'Perhaps there is some wrong that she wants set right.'

'There's Rover barking in the pleasance; come and look at him,' said the child, running to the window. 'Why see! he is barking at that pretty lady; he always does bark at strangers. Who can she be? Look, she is stopping to make friends with him; he's quiet now, he's wagging his tail.'

'But Tom,' said Audrey in astonishment, 'there is no lady there, only the dog.'

‘Yes, there is! Why, I can see her as plain, as plain! She’s coming this way, she’s looking up at us. Oh! it is the lady in the picture—how lovely—how lovely she is. It’s you she’s looking at! What is it she wants so much?’

‘Dear Tom, it’s your fancy, there’s nothing to be seen at all, only the dog wagging his tail.’

‘It’s the ghost lady. And she’s begging you to do something for her,’ said Tom, struggling to unfasten the window. ‘What is it that you want, ma’am?’ he called in his shrill treble. ‘Oh, she gave such a smile at that, and now she’s looking at you; she must be very fond of you. Oh, see! she’s going, she’s waving her hand. She’s gone out, just as my soap-bubbles go.’

Audrey looked in some perplexity at her companion’s intent little face. She was afraid that his brooding over the ghost story, and the sight of the picture, had over-excited his brain.

‘You have been having a spring afternoon’s dream, Tom,’ she said laughingly. ‘Come, let us have a good game of battledore and shuttlecock. I’ll warrant I can beat you at that.’

Delighted to have a playfellow, Tom willingly assented to this plan, and they were still hard at work, and making the nursery ring with their merry voices and the monotonous beat of the battledores, when the old serving-man came to say that the coach was at the door, and would Mistress Radcliffe come to the withdrawing room.

‘I shall never be afraid of the ghost any more,’ whispered Tom in her ear, ‘now that I’ve seen *her*.’

The farewells were said and Audrey and her mother were shut into the cumbrous old coach.

‘Such a strange thing has happened, mother,’ said the girl eagerly. ‘Through the chatter of little Tom Simpson I have learnt something more about Michael

Derwent's mother; there can be no doubt that she was old Mr. Carleton's runaway daughter, for her picture is precisely like the miniature we found. Do they know who she married?'

'They have no idea. Mrs. Simpson was talking of it just now. I believe old Mr. Carleton knows, but no one else has ever discovered who the man was.'

'We must let Michael know about this,' said Audrey. 'I will write to him and tell him just what I found out.'

'No need to write,' said Mrs. Radcliffe. 'We shall soon be at home again and shall doubtless see him.'

'Yes, we shall soon be home,' said Audrey, and then with a sudden catching of the breath she gripped fast hold of her mother's hand. For as they passed out through the gate something made the horses shy violently and for a minute it seemed that the coach must be overturned. Then plunging and kicking in desperate terror the frightened animals suddenly bolted and went tearing madly along the road to Penrith.

'Don't be frightened, dear,' said Mrs. Radcliffe, surprised to see the deathly pallor of Audrey's face, for as a rule the girl was not easily alarmed.

'Oh mother!' she said, trembling violently, 'it was the ghost that made them shy, I saw her by the gatepost, and she was weeping bitterly.'

'You are overwrought,' said her mother soothingly. 'It must have been your fancy and the memory of the picture.'

So she argued, but the fact remained that the terrified horses were still galloping at a pace which seemed incredible considering the load they were dragging; that the coachman sat on the box trembling like a man with the palsy, quite unable to control them, and that the Carleton coach was rolling and swinging from side to side, bumping over stones, crashing through ruts and shaking the occupants intolerably. At length there

came one tremendous upheaving, and the coach was overturned just as they reached the outskirts of Penrith.

How long they lay there stunned Audrey had no notion; she awoke to the consciousness that someone was lifting her up and that the fresh cold wind was blowing on her face. In a bewildered way she looked round; two passers by were lifting Mrs. Radcliffe, and as they laid her on the grass by the roadside she heard her mother moan faintly. The sound made her start to her feet and hasten to Mrs. Radcliffe's side. It was evident that she was seriously hurt, nor did she entirely recover consciousness until they had carried her back to Uncle Aglionby's house, where, under the care of Aunt Aglionby's maid, who seemed to have every appliance that was needed for fainting ladies, from harts-horn to burnt feathers, she gradually came to herself.

Audrey breathed more freely on hearing the surgeon's report that no bones were broken, but before long it became evident that some serious internal mischief had been caused by the accident, and their unlucky drive from Carleton Manor proved the beginning of a long and wearing illness which made any thought of returning to Lord's Island out of the question for some months.

CHAPTER XIII

AT Isel Hall the summer passed by uneventfully. Michael had had plenty to do, and fortunately it had not been possible for him to brood over his private troubles, for no one could live with Sir Wilfrid and fail to take a keen and practical interest in the affairs of the political world. Though sorry to hear of Mrs. Radcliffe's tedious illness, Audrey's enforced stay at Penrith was clear gain to him, and he was not without hope that Sir Wilfrid—who had recently been made a baronet—might be compelled before long to make a journey to London in connection with a lawsuit, and that by accompanying him he might still further postpone that dreaded meeting with the girl he loved, in her new position as Henry Brownrigg's betrothed.

One September afternoon, dinner being over, he was pacing to and fro in the quaint walled garden which lay in front of the house, when he saw, coming towards him down the broad flight of stone steps which were always half veiled by moss and ferns, the well-known figure of Zinogle, the Keswick fiddler.

'Why, Zinogle!' he exclaimed, greeting the old man heartily. 'Tis an age since I saw you. How goes the world at Keswick?'

'Not so well as it did last November, sir, when we fired the beacon,' said Zinogle with a sly gleam in his eye. 'There's less of thanking the Almighty and more of grumbling and squabbling. For my part I say long live King William, who had the chimney tax repealed.'

‘What! you bring a letter for me?’ said Michael, glancing curiously at the missive which Zinogle produced from his leather wallet.

‘A letter from Mr. Noel, sir, and I’ve just delivered one from Mrs. Radcliffe to Sir Wilfrid Lawson.’

‘Is Mrs. Radcliffe at Lord’s Island then?’ asked Michael, his heart stirring uncomfortably.

‘Yes, sir, they are at home, and Mrs. Radcliffe calls herself well, but to my thinking she’ll never again be what she was before her accident.’

Michael did not reply; he was busy with Mr. Noel’s letter, which brought him news that was sufficiently startling.

‘MY DEAR MICHAEL:

A rumour has reached us that Sir Wilfrid Lawson is about to go to London. Deeming it probable that you will attend him, I am most anxious to see you first that I may give you an introduction to an old friend of mine who may, I believe, be of service to you. Mrs. Radcliffe is writing to Sir Wilfrid Lawson, at the request of Sir Nicholas, and trusts that he will break his journey here. There is yet a further reason why we are anxious to get speech of you. While at Penrith Mrs. Radcliffe and her daughter visited a Mr. Robert Carleton of Carleton Manor; they have reason to believe that he must be your grandfather, but have not succeeded in getting actual proof. The name corresponds with that in the book which was given you at Watendlath and I think you should lose no time in following up the clue.

I am, yours very faithfully,

AUGUSTINE NOEL.’

Michael read this letter with very mingled feelings. To escape from this quiet place would indeed be a relief; he had suffered too bitterly in that stately old hall with its imposing façade and its massive pele tower not to crave for fresh fields and pastures new; the thought of at length finding his mother’s people stimulated his

fancy, and the notion of at length seeing London pleased him well enough; but all this would be dearly purchased by having to stay at Lord's Island under the same roof as Audrey, and with the constant dread that Henry Brownrigg might appear upon the scene.

'Well, after all!' he reflected somewhat bitterly, 'I am not my own master and shall have to do as Sir Wilfrid thinks best.'

'Come indoors, Zinogle,' he said, turning to the fiddler; 'you must want rest and food after your journey, and I will go and write a reply to Mr. Noel.'

A journey to London in those days was a formidable undertaking, and in this instance Sir Wilfrid knew that he would probably meet with a thousand delays and hindrances and that several months would probably elapse before he returned to the north country. Many things had to be discussed and arranged; the attorney was summoned from Cockermouth to make out a new will, tenants had to be seen and entertained, accounts overhauled, and everything set in order as though instead of making a journey to the south of England, the good baronet was taking leave of this world altogether.

However, at length all arrangements were made, and on a bright October morning Sir Wilfrid and his secretary set out for the long-talked-of expedition. It was about noon when they reached Keswick, and Michael, in spite of himself, felt a thrill of pleasure as he caught sight once more of Derwentwater glistening in the sun and beyond it that wonderful vista of the Borrowdale crags. He might be coming face to face with sorrow, but after all it was a home-coming, and he felt new life in him as he looked lovingly at those familiar mountains which had been the friends of his childhood. No other place in the world could ever be to him what Borrowdale had been.

Putting up their horses at Stable Hills Farm, they

were rowed across the narrow strip of water to the island by old William Hollins, and then, with steady steps but a wildly throbbing heart, Michael walked beside his patron up the familiar path to the great door. It opened just as they approached, and he saw Audrey standing between the two old serving-men, waiting to receive her grandfather's guests, and making a pretty apology to Sir Wilfrid. Sir Nicholas, she said, was not well, and they had persuaded him not to venture from the hearth. The next moment her hand was in Michael's, and she was giving him the most matter-of-fact greeting, friendly but preoccupied,—apparently quite oblivious that anything out of the common had happened since they had last held each other's hands at Raby Castle.

Well, he reflected, she had never in the least understood what she had been to him, and it was better so. His heart seemed to turn into a lump of ice, but then, after all, was not that more or less convenient? He found himself able to talk with perfect *sang-froid*, even to jest with Father Noel—as most people called him in these more tolerant days—over the outfit he would need directly he reached London.

Mrs. Radcliffe was particularly kind to him, perhaps because her quick insight penetrated below his mask of composure and well-assumed indifference; or possibly because she could not help rejoicing in the thought that she was not to have this penniless and nameless foundling for a son-in-law,—a mere boy, moreover, contrasting most unfavourably in every respect with the Under-Sheriff, who was a man of good standing, wealthy, and eminently fitted to protect Audrey from the wiles of Father Noel.

It did not occur to her that the priest's schemes were by no means ended by the betrothal, and that he had no intention whatever of quietly acquiescing in what

seemed to him a most disastrous state of things. She retired when dinner was over, leaving the gentlemen over their wine, and being still weak after her long illness, she was glad to go to her own room and rest while Audrey took a basketful of scraps of bread and went out to feed her swans.

Father Noel caught sight of her just as Sir Nicholas rose from the table, and went off to the library with Sir Wilfrid Lawson. He glanced from the girl's retreating figure to the face of his pupil and thought for a moment. Was he deliberately to lead this boy into temptation?

'His heart is frozen,' he reflected. 'It must at any cost be thawed, or he will inevitably go to the dogs. Were there another woman likely to serve the purpose I would throw him in her way, but as things are it is absolutely necessary that we should keep him still in love with Audrey. He will suffer, but that can't be helped. To save him from himself, and to save her from Henry Brownrigg, I must put up with that and run a certain amount of risk.'

'Let us come out together in the orchard,' he said, turning to Michael. 'I want to speak a few words with you as to my friend in London, to whom you have kindly promised to bear a book. He, also, was one of those falsely suspected in the time of the so-called Popish plot in 1678. We left London together, but he has spent most of his time abroad, having only lately returned to London. I know that you are not one of the bigots who will have no dealings with a Catholic, or I should not have asked this service of you.'

'I will gladly serve any friend of yours, sir,' said Michael. 'What is the gentleman's name?'

'Ask for him under the name of Mr. Calverley. He is staying in Villiers Street, York Buildings. I have known him for many years, and shall be grateful if you will deliver into his hands the letter and packet I will

give you. And now let us say a word as to your own affairs.'

'As to this Mr. Carleton of Penrith, sir?'

'Yes. It was strange that the discovery should have been made, was it not?'

'It comes too late,' said Michael with a sigh. 'I care little about it now.'

'There I think you are wrong. Audrey cares very much indeed, and is most anxious that you should investigate matters for yourself.'

He coloured painfully. 'Is she?' he said. 'How can it affect her?'

Father Noel hailed both the blush and the slight faltering of the voice. The thawing process had clearly begun.

'It may affect her more than you think,' he said, and the words were strictly true, but he said them in one sense and knew quite well that they would convey a very different sense to Michael.

There was silence for some minutes. The two paced on beneath the trees until they came to the water, and here, standing on the shore with four snowy swans close to the margin of the water, they saw Audrey feeding her favourites.

'Are they not beautiful creatures?' she said. 'Now there is only one bit of bread left,—they shall have a race for it.'

She flung it far out and clapped her hands as the largest swan followed the prize.

'I knew he would beat the others,' she said. 'Isn't he splendid with his long, stately neck?'

'The race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong,' said Father Noel musingly, and the words made Michael pull himself together, for he always instinctively rebelled against Audrey's curious admiration for mere bulk.

Fortunately for him, strength was not dependent on size.

‘Do you think,’ said the priest, ‘that Sir Wilfrid will object to your going to Carleton Manor, on your way to London? I think you should get speech of Mr. Carleton himself. That would be possible, I suppose, Audrey?’

‘Oh, yes,’ said the girl eagerly. ‘Though he is an invalid I think he would certainly see you, and he is the only person who knows who it was his daughter ran away with; they say he has never mentioned the name and that there were all sorts of guesses made at the time in Penrith. But old Mrs. Aglionby thinks it must have been to some stranger from quite another neighbourhood.’

They had strolled along as far as the fallen tree, where a year before they had sat together on the day of Michael’s return; he recognised the place at once and sighed as all the old hopes and dreams recurred to his mind.

‘Tell all about your discovery of the picture,’ said Father Noel, and for a minute or two he sat down beside them, but soon complained of the cold and wandered away by himself.

The two scarcely noted his departure, for Audrey was thoroughly interested in telling exactly what had passed at Carleton Manor, and Michael was not only absorbed in her description, but seemed unable to take his eyes from her face.

In truth she looked most lovely with her soft grey eyes, a trifle wider than usual as she spoke of the apparition, her face all animation and life, her sunny-brown curls lightly stirred by the western wind. And the priest had spoken truly, for she did care very much that he should follow up the clue she had so strangely discovered. After all, was his case absolutely hopeless?

Wild dreams began to find place in his mind; was there not, after all, many a slip 'twixt cup and lip? She was not yet wedded to Henry Brownrigg. Mrs. Radcliffe's illness had already delayed the marriage. Might not some other chance intervene and once more save her from a fate which seemed more intolerable now than ever?

'It is strange,' he said, 'but I, too, had the same vision of my mother, although only in a dream.'

He told her of his walk with Father Noel, and of how he had waited on the Styhead Pass and had seen what he had never for a moment doubted to be his mother; and then with far more hope than he had felt at the time, he told all that had passed at Watendlath, Audrey listening with that whole-hearted attention which she had always shown in matters that concerned him.

By and bye he took the copy of Thomas à Kempis from his pocket and they looked at it together. Audrey's thoughts were of that strange romance of the past; absorbed in picturing poor Lucy, whose sweet, sad face had been stamped on her heart ever since she had seen it at the gate of Carleton Manor, she never paused to reflect that her curls brushed Michael's cheek and fell on his hand as together they bent over the book. But he was conscious of it in every fibre of his being, and it was with a bewildered wonder that he read mechanically on the page at which Audrey had opened, the description of a man who, hundreds of years before, had somehow attained to a peace of mind which seemed scarcely credible.

'He committed himself wholly to the will of God, and that noisome anxiety ceased. Neither had he the mind to search curiously any farther, to know what should befall him; but rather laboured to understand what was the perfect and acceptable will of God

for the beginning and accomplishing of every good work.'

Audrey read on thoughtfully, but his eyes were no longer on the book, but on that bright soft tress of hair which rested on the back of his hand.

At that moment a shadow darkened the sunlight and made them both look up hastily, imagining that Father Noel had strolled back towards them along the grassy path. Audrey gave a little exclamation of surprise and pleasure when she saw that it was not the priest at all, but Henry Brownrigg. She greeted him gaily, and never noticed the expression on his face until he turned to Michael with the stiffest and most unfriendly of salutations. Then she glanced in perplexity from one to the other. What did it all mean? Both men were evidently furious; her lover's brow wore a frown so menacing and stormy that for the first time in her life she was afraid of him; while Michael, with flushed face and over-bright eyes, stood by erect and scornful, defiance in his whole attitude.

There was an awkward pause; she had an instinct that unless she broke it quickly something terrible would happen, and with an effort she made a step or two forward and put her hand on Henry Brownrigg's arm.

'See,' she said gently, 'we were looking at this book which was found at Watendlath. It belonged to Michael's mother and will form a link in the chain of evidence he is getting together.'

'Indeed!' he said with sarcasm in his voice, and taking the book from her hand, he gave it to Michael with a formal bow, and a look which said as plainly as words, 'I should like to throw it at your head if courtesy did not forbid.'

Michael glanced swiftly at Audrey; her clear, innocent eyes had a troubled look. He felt that for her sake he ought not to linger.

‘I have an errand in Keswick,’ he said, ‘and shall not return till supper time. Can I do anything for you in the town?’

She thanked him, but said she needed nothing, and with a sense of relief saw him disappear among the trees, leaving her alone with her lover.

‘How long has that boy been here with you?’ said Henry in an angry voice.

‘Michael? He came with Sir Wilfrid Lawson just before dinner.’

‘You know very well I meant what o’clock was it when he came out here with you alone.’

Perhaps she resented his masterful tone, or perhaps it was merely her innate love of teasing which made her reply with a laugh:

‘As Orlando said to Rosalind, “There’s no clock in the forest!”’

‘I will not have him hanging about you!’ said Henry Brownrigg furiously. ‘Can’t you see yourself how unseemly it is?’

‘I don’t understand you,’ she said, colouring. ‘Michael is my foster-brother. I knew him long before I knew you. If my grandfather and my mother choose to invite him here as a guest it is not your place to complain that we talk together.’

Henry Brownrigg had the shrewdness to see that he had made a mistake in adopting such a tone to his betrothed, and with an effort he refrained from saying another word as to Michael, though his heart was still hot within him.

‘Of course you very naturally wished to tell your ghost story,’ he said, allowing his face to relax into a smile. ‘I had forgotten that.’

Then seeing that she still looked grave and displeased, he threw his arm about her, and began to tell her of the wearing work he had had to do that morning, and to

speaking of the future when he should have her always near to gladden his life.

‘But I am forgetting the special reason of my visit,’ he said at length. ‘It was to ask whether you and Mrs. Radcliffe will not spend a day with us next week. The short distance to Millbeck Hall would surely not be too much for your mother, and there are many things to discuss and arrange before our marriage.’

‘We could come for the day,’ said Audrey, ‘but indeed I don’t think my mother can spare me yet; she is not strong. Don’t urge her to fix any early date for the wedding.’

She could hardly have explained why for the first time she felt a dread of her lover; she was not in the least accustomed to analysing her thoughts. Had she done so she might have discovered that the entire blindness of her admiration was at an end; his revelation of petty jealousy of so old a friend as Michael, the insufferable manner in which he had looked at her foster-brother, had in reality opened her eyes to perceive something of his true character. Now, love has power to see faults and blemishes and still to love on, because it goes deeper than the faults, and loves what shall one day be perfected. But the so-called love which is only admiration is quickly killed by the sudden discovery of serious failings; never having penetrated below the surface, it withers and dies easily enough.

Audrey’s admiration of her betrothed was by no means ended that October afternoon, but the perfect content she had enjoyed during the first part of their engagement was over. Had she been able to follow him when he left her his true self would have been plainly revealed, but unfortunately she never guessed that he rode away from Stable Hills Farm with the full intention of overtaking Michael before he reached Keswick.

To his great satisfaction, he came upon him close to

Castle Hill, for Michael was on foot. He reined in his horse.

‘A word with you, Mr. Derwent, if you please,’ he said in his haughtiest tone.

Michael stood still and looked his rival in the face.

‘Understand plainly, sir,’ said Henry Brownrigg, ‘that I will not endure a repetition of what I saw to-day. I will not have you enjoying private interviews with my betrothed.’

‘Do you dare to dictate to Sir Nicholas Radcliffe’s guests?’ said Michael angrily. ‘Let me remind you, sir, that Lord’s Island is not your property.’

‘No,’ said Henry Brownrigg with a sneer. ‘It is not, but Mistress Audrey Radcliffe is my property.’

‘Not yet,’ said Michael passionately. ‘Thank God you can’t say that till she is your wife. The law will permit you to do it then, and, like Petruchio, I have no doubt you’ll proclaim “She is my goods, my chattels, my horse, my ox, my ass, my anything!”’

‘Perhaps I shall,’ said Henry Brownrigg, determined to provoke a quarrel. ‘It is nothing to you. What have you to do, pray, with Audrey Radcliffe? You! a mere foundling bastard!’

The blood rushed to Michael’s face.

‘You lie!’ he said fiercely. ‘Take back your words or give me satisfaction.’

‘That would please me better than anything,’ said Henry Brownrigg with a sneer, ‘and since you leave to-morrow——’

He broke off abruptly, for from among the trees and bushes which clothed the lower part of Castle Hill there suddenly emerged an old and venerable-looking man wearing a sober-hued doublet and a plain, broad-brimmed hat, black-silk hose of the finest quality, and silver shoe buckles which were faultlessly polished.

‘Friend,’ he said to Michael, ‘do not forget.’

Michael turned to the speaker; his eyes were bright with passion, his boyish face flushed, but the Quaker's calm voice and manner exerted over him the same extraordinary influence as on that March day when he had first heard of Audrey's betrothal.

'Sir,' he said, 'Mr. Brownrigg foully slandered my mother. Am I to stand still and endure that? He lies, and knows it right well.'

'If thou dost fight every liar thy sword would never be sheathed,' said the Quaker; 'remember the sage who sought through a city for one honest man, yet found him not for all his seeking. As for thee, Henry Brownrigg, I heard thee stirring up strife with thy unseemly words, and, as Audrey Radcliffe's kinsman, I liked it very ill that thou didst so little reverence her as to speak of her as thy property in the public way.'

'Had I known, sir, that Mistress Radcliffe's illustrious Quaker cousin, instead of being in prison, was skulking among the trees, I would have spoken more carefully,' said Henry Brownrigg with a sneer on his handsome face.

'I take thy words as an apology,' said the Quaker. 'But, nevertheless, 'tis the presence of the Lord, not the presence of man, that should teach thee rightly to reverence woman.'

'Well, Derwent, the fates are against us,' said the Under-Sheriff with a laugh as he touched up his horse. 'It seems that this time we must forego our meeting. Better luck, I hope, in our next dispute.'

Michael, with a sick feeling of disappointment, bowed in silence, and watched his rival until he disappeared among the trees which bordered the horse track.

The Quaker eyed him keenly, understanding well enough what was passing in his mind.

'Art thou wise to visit at Lord's Island?' he said at last.

‘I am in attendance on Sir Wilfrid Lawson, sir,’ said Michael. ‘The visit was none of my seeking. We only rest there to-night on our way to London, and there were letters of introduction which Father Noel wished to give me.’

They walked on together, as they spoke, in the direction of Keswick.

‘Do not take it ill of me if I speak plainly to thee with regard to Augustine Noel,’ said the Quaker. ‘He is, as I know, an old and tried friend of thine, but I would have thee careful as to these same letters of introduction. London is in a troubled state, as I learn from my worthy friend George Fox; the very elect may be deceived, led, before they know it, into meddling with matters of earthly government.’

‘I am the last to wish to dabble in politics,’ said Michael with an air of distaste, ‘and am well content with our new King and Queen. All I care for is to see the town, to get away to something that will be fresh, and free from memories. You can never have known, sir, what restlessness means.’

‘Indeed, ’tis a malady that doth too often haunt a prison,’ said the Quaker with a smile upon his quiet face. ‘But ’tis a foe to be wrestled with and not lightly yielded to. Do not in thy restlessness become like the rolling stone of the proverb which gathers no moss. As for thy journey to London, that is well enough, only have a care and remember that thy life is not thine own. Tell me, hast thou room in thy valise for a small book? If so I would be much beholden to thee if thou wouldst carry it to George Fox, who is scarce likely again to be at Swarthmoor Hall, or to venture upon a journey to these parts, for he waxes old and feeble.’

Michael gladly undertook to deliver the packet to the great leader of the Friends, and Nathaniel Radcliffe prevailed upon him to stay and sup at Hye Hill, where, in

the stillness of the parlour in which he had once lived through so strange an experience, he began once more to face the life that lay before him, shamed into patient endurance by the silent influence of his Quaker friend.

CHAPTER XIV

Recollections of Michael Derwent.

MORE than seven months passed by after the March day when I first heard of Audrey's betrothal before I again found myself at Hye Hill. Late in October I had to attend Sir Wilfrid to London, and on our way, at Sir Nicholas Radcliffe's request, we lay for a night at the mansion on Lord's Island. It chanced unluckily that I came across Henry Brownrigg there; and afterwards, near Castle Hill, high words passed betwixt us, so that we should certainly have fought upon the matter had not my Quaker friend suddenly appeared, managed to patch up a peace between us, and brought me to his house.

What it was in Nathaniel Radcliffe and that sweet-faced old lady his wife which wrought so strange an effect on me I never can tell. I went into their house heated and chafed and at war with fate; I came out again calmed, and with a strength that made me ready to face outer storms. Yet they never preached at me,—it was not the Quaker way to speak much of religion. They were just friends; and it was not what they did or what they spoke, but what they were in themselves, which somehow worked like magic. My old fancy that Hye Hill was heaven, came back to me curiously that night, and perhaps, after all, the dream had not been wholly wrong; for in this old couple there certainly was a heavenly-mindedness I never saw elsewhere. Had

they gained it in those long years of persecution and imprisonment? Was it the reward—the martyr's crown—won by their patient suffering?

All the way back to Lord's Island I pondered over it.

There was a light in the window of the withdrawing-room, and in the still evening air I caught the sound of music as William Hollins set me down at the landing-place.

Drawing nearer, the whole room became clearly visible to me. Sir Nicholas, in his armchair by the hearth, beat time feebly with his long, slender hand; Mrs. Radcliffe was playing at chess with Sir Wilfrid, while Audrey, with her nut-brown hair gleaming like gold in the lamplight, sang to her lute Ben Jonson's song, 'See the chariot at hand here of love.'

Her voice, though sweet, was not very strong, and the charm of her singing lay in the clear, unaffected way in which she rendered the words. I could have wished it had not been so that night, for each phrase seemed to have its own special torture for me.

‘ Have you seen but a bright lily grow,
 Before rude hands have touched it ?
 Have you mark'd but the fall of the snow
 Before the soil hath smutched it ?
 Have you felt the wool of the beaver ?
 Or swan's down ever ?
 Or have smelt the bud of the briar ?
 Or the nard in the fire ?
 Or have tasted the bag of the bee ?
 O, so white! O, so soft! O, so sweet is she! ’

The very unconsciousness with which she sang seemed to heighten the charm of the song. I turned away trembling like a palsied man.

In the hall I came across Father Noel. He was pac-

ing to and fro, breviary in hand, and with one of his swift glances he read my face. Audrey's lute still sounded through the silent house.

'Welcome back again,' he said with his pleasant smile. 'Will you join them in the withdrawing-room, or will you have supper first?'

'I supped at Hye Hill,' I replied, and then briefly told him of the dispute with Henry Brownrigg and of the Quaker's intervention.

'He was quite right,' said Father Noel. 'You were ever too ready to fight that braggart. Henry Brownrigg needs tackling in other ways. Do not forget to see what you can of my friend Mr. Calverley when you reach London; and now let us join the others.'

But I hung back and begged him to make my excuses, to say that I was preparing for the journey, or was indisposed, for to meet Audrey again at that minute seemed to me intolerable.

The priest, however, with a persistence that I could not understand, would take no refusal, and I was forced to follow him into the room where the family was assembled. He could not force me, however, to approach Audrey. I stood by the fire near Sir Nicholas, while Father Noel took the vacant chair close to the singer and asked for one song after another, deliberately choosing—or so it seemed to me—the ones that would give me the keenest pain. That he hated Henry Brownrigg and shrank from the idea of the marriage I knew well enough, but why, now that the betrothal was a fact, did he add to my misery by compelling me to meet the woman I vainly loved?

I had reached Lord's Island that morning with a heart like a lump of ice, but when I left the next day, after a miserable night haunted by visions of past happiness, love and passion and pain raged within me once more, and dreams as wild as an old fairy tale began to

take shape in my mind as I rode beside Sir Wilfrid to Penrith.

In the forenoon of the following day I rode to Carleton Manor. Audrey had described the house so well that I seemed to know every stone of it, and standing in the morning sunshine, the whole place seemed steeped in peace. It was what they call St. Luke's summer; not a breath of wind stirred the russet and gold of the trees, only now and then a leaf detached itself from its twig and fluttered noiselessly down upon the smooth green turf below. One could hardly picture that restless, sad spirit, which Audrey had described, haunting a place where all things seemed so tranquil.

Feeling not unlike Jack the giant-killer, I blew the horn which hung beside the great door, and after some little delay an old serving-man appeared in somewhat shabby livery. I inquired whether it were possible to see Mr. Carleton.

The old man looked at me very narrowly. A puzzled expression stole over his wrinkled face.

'The master sees few guests, being an invalid,' he said.

'But I come on an urgent matter and bring letters of introduction,' I said persuasively. Whereupon the old man, still eyeing me very curiously, permitted me to enter, and ushering me into a small anteroom, took the letter with which Mrs. Radcliffe had furnished me and hobbled off into the adjoining apartment.

'Don't disturb me,' said a harsh, irritable voice, plainly audible through the open door.

The toothless old serving-man was not so audible, but I heard a remonstrating mumble.

'I tell you I will not be disturbed. Curse your impudence.'

'Mumble, mumble, mumble.'

'Well, open the confounded letter, then, and hand it

to me to read, you idiot! What! Mrs. Radcliffe, who was in the overturned coach? Humph! I suppose I must see the gentleman. Shift my leg for me, you blockhead, and show him in.'

I began to think it would be no pleasant task to go and claim kinship with this irascible old invalid, and my heart beat fast as I was shown into the presence of a white-haired and most crabbed-looking veteran of about eighty, who gave me a ceremonious greeting, and inquired after Mrs. Radcliffe's health. When I had replied to that, there followed an uncomfortable pause. Some instinct warned me as I looked at old Mr. Carleton not to beat about the bush, but to speak straightforwardly, even abruptly.

'Sir,' I said, 'you will wonder what hath brought me here to trouble you with a question, seeing that I am a total stranger. But perhaps you will bear with me when I tell you that all my life will be overclouded till my question is answered. My mother was deserted by her husband just before my birth; she died refusing to reveal his name, and only within the last few months have I discovered her maiden name. It is written in this book.' And with that I opened and held towards him the copy of *Thomas à Kempis*.

His bushy white eyebrows contracted as he peered down at the inscription; then with a fierce, quick movement he clutched me by the shoulder and drew me down that he might more closely scan my face. The scrutiny would have been embarrassing, but something in the old man's eager eyes arrested my attention, and I fell to thinking of him rather than of myself. There was something piteous after all about his crabbed, solitary, old age.

'You are Lucy's son; there is no doubt about that,' he said, falling back to his former position. 'The child of her shame.'

‘Sir,’ I said, ‘I have met one who actually witnessed my mother’s marriage; he is one whose word you could not possibly doubt—as worthy a baronet as is to be found in all the county of Durham. He pledged himself at the time not to reveal her husband’s name. That is why I come to you to-day to ask it.’

‘You come to me?’ he said with a bitter, mirthless laugh. ‘You could not have come to a worse person.’

‘Surely, sir,’ I pleaded, ‘you will not withhold from me my own father’s name. I have a right to know it,—if only that I may call him to account for having first deserted my mother and then done his best to murder me by the Spartan plan of exposure.’

Old Mr. Carleton’s eyes lit up with a gleam of something like sympathy.

‘I like your spirit,’ he said. ‘I would help you if I could, but that arch-deceiver’s name is still unknown to me. My daughter did not see fit to inform me who it was that imposed upon her, who it was in whose honour she confided rather than in the honour of the father to whom she owed everything.’

This unexpected blow fairly staggered me.

‘You do not know even his name?’ I faltered. ‘Then surely you must be able at least to guess which of her admirers she was likely to favour.’

‘Indeed, sir, I can do nothing of the kind,’ said the old man bitterly. ‘You have doubtless heard from Mrs. Radcliffe the current version of the tale. You not unnaturally side with your mother, but now hear my side of the story. I have never spoken of it from that day to this, but now methinks I have a mind that Lucy’s son should hear both versions. Have the goodness, sir, to cross the room and open the doors of that Japan cabinet.’

I obeyed, turned the curiously wrought brass key, and

revealed the daintily arranged pigeonholes and drawers inside.

‘Now press with your fingers on the bottom of the centre compartment,’ said Mr. Carleton.

This apparently touched a spring, for out flew a little secret drawer in which there lay a letter yellow with age.

Mr. Carleton told me to bring it to him, and motioned to me to resume my former place.

‘My wife had died,’ he said, ‘at the birth of our second daughter, and thus, at twelve years old, Lucy found herself mistress of this house. I had no fault to find with her; she was dutiful and affectionate. I expected perfect obedience, and she never refused it until it came to the time of her proposed marriage; then, without any warning, she changed her whole method of behaviour, and flatly refused to marry the husband I had chosen for her. It became a contest of wills. I knew that I should not yield, and thought that with time and patience we should bring her to hear reason. But the girl was old for her years, had some inkling of what marriage involved, and vowed that nothing on earth should make her wed worthy Sir James Grey, because, forsooth, he was, like other gentlemen, a little over-free at times with the wine. At last, as you know, she fled from home, and the news brought to me the next day so shattered my health that by the time I could attend to things again it was useless to search for her.’

‘But she wrote?’ I said, eagerly glancing at the letter.

‘Ay, weeks after her flight this letter arrived—it had evidently been delayed on the road. Probably her lover saw to that. Read it, sir, and see what you make of it.’

I unfolded the letter; it was written in a clear, round hand, but the spelling was in many places faulty.

‘MY DEARE SIR:

To have disobeyed you and given you grieve pains me, but I could not wed Sir James. I knew you would not relent; therefore my only course was to leave home. I had intended to go to old Betty the nursekeeper at York, but on the road, being in danger from a highwayman, I was courteously rescued by a gentleman that was journeying with a friend to London. They vowed to protect me, and we journeyed on together. Deare sir, my kindly rescuer hath won my heart, and hath promised to wed me when we reach London. He is a gentleman of an honourable family, and I truste you will pardon me for having prifered him to the husband you had chosen for me, since to wed Sir James would have been lifelong miserie to me. I pray you to forgive me, and to let me know of yure forgiveness, deare sir. I will write again from London to send you word where we have made our home. Pardon this ill writ letter; the messenger waits and I am in haste, as we travel on at once.

I remain, yure most affectionate daughter,

LUCY CARLETON.’

‘And did she write again?’ I asked eagerly.

‘Never again,’ said the old man, bitterly. ‘She had at least enough good feeling to hide her shame.’

‘But, sir, I have seen an eye-witness of her marriage,’ I said. ‘Surely it was her sorrow and disappointment in having wedded one who quickly tired of her that kept her silent. Nor did she know whether you would forgive her flight.’

The old man’s eyes seemed to soften a little; he looked at me very searchingly.

‘Sir,’ he said, ‘you are young and hopeful. I think you have not yet seen much of the world. For my own part I believe your worthy baronet, who witnessed the marriage ceremony, was hoodwinked by his scoundrel of a friend. We all know that it is easy enough to go through a form of marriage. Your mother, I doubt not, was easily deceived. She was like you, slow to suspect

evil, and altogether wanting in judgment. She preferred this adventurer, this total stranger, to the husband I had chosen for her—one who owned as fair an estate as could be desired.'

The thought that Sir Christopher Vane had been deceived had not occurred to me, and I remembered reluctantly, and with an effort to suppress the thought, that he must have been very young at the time, and a mere country-bred lad.

'I'll not rest till I have met my father face to face and heard the truth from his own lips,' I said, starting up with a longing to set off on my quest there and then.

Old Mr. Carleton watched me in silence for a minute.

'Take that letter with you,' he said. 'It may be of use in proving matters. God grant you may succeed in calling that villain to account. God grant, that I may live to see him suffer as he deserves.'

'Amen to that,' I said hotly, for the old man's righteous anger touched an answering chord in my heart.

'Sir,' I pleaded after a moment's silence, 'there is one favour I would ask you. Mistress Audrey Radcliffe spoke of a picture of my mother which she saw here in one of the upper rooms. I would fain see it with your permission, and judge how far it corresponds with this miniature.'

He held out his hand eagerly for the miniature, and gazed at it for some minutes in silence, then made me tell him exactly when and where it had been found.

'Depend upon it, 'twas a mock marriage,' he said. 'Why should a man be so anxious to be rid of all traces of his dead wife? And why should he practically murder his own son and heir? But all the more reason that you do your utmost to search for this villain and expose him. Ring that bell, sir, and I will send for the picture. Timothy,' he added as the old serving-man appeared,

‘bring down once more the portrait that used to hang above the sideboard.’

The old servant, with an involuntary start of astonishment at such a command, disappeared, favouring me, however, with a keen glance as he left the room.

‘You bear your story in your face,’ said Mr. Carleton. ‘The fellow sees who you are.’ Then with that curious, intent look in which I could not help thinking there lurked something like affection, the old man gripped hold of my hand. ‘You must not take it ill of me,’ he said, ‘if I ask you to do me a favour. Left as a foundling, you cannot have much of this world’s goods to help you on your way.’

‘Sir Wilfrid Lawson gave me my education, sir, and I have my salary of eighteen pounds a year and the use of a horse, that is more than many secretaries receive.’

‘True,’ he replied. ‘He has dealt generously with you, but if you are to trace out this scoundrel you will need money, and I would fain have my money used for such a purpose. Take this purse and furnish yourself with all that you need; nay, I’ll take no refusal! Use it, if not to pleasure me, then to avenge your mother.’

It was impossible after this to decline the old man’s gift, and indeed little more could be said, for at that moment the serving-man entered, staggering under the weight of an oil painting nearly as tall as himself. Very eagerly I looked at the picture Audrey had described, and saw at once that it exactly corresponded with the miniature; moreover, I could see in this larger portrait more distinctly that the face was indeed as my own.

I glanced towards old Mr. Carleton and saw that his wrinkled face was quivering with emotion. He held out his hand in farewell, evidently unable to endure any more.

‘Go and prosper,’ he said fervently. ‘Avenge her, sir! Avenge her!’

CHAPTER XV

Recollections of Michael Derwent.

OUR journey to London was uneventful but somewhat tedious, and I was heartily glad when we at length reached the house of Sir Wilfrid's friend, Sir William Denham. It stood in Norfolk Street, betwixt the river and the Strand, and was to be our headquarters during our stay, for the two were close friends, and had many hobbies in common, both being lovers of science and keen naturalists.

The actual day of our arrival had not of course been fixed, and we chanced to get in on an evening when guests had been bidden.

Now, one of the smaller discomforts of my life had always been the uncertainty of position which attaches to anyone in such circumstances. Most men are fixed by fate either in one sphere or the other. I hovered uncertainly on the borderland, one of the waifs of the world, yet educated as a gentleman, and enjoying many privileges owing to Sir Wilfrid's kind-heartedness and to the affection which he had always shown me. At Isel I had never anything to complain of, and at Raby, thanks to Sir Christopher Vane's interest on the night of our arrival, I had been treated precisely like any other guest. But elsewhere often enough there were snubs and disagreeables to be encountered, those petty vexations which affect an older and wiser mortal very little, but rankle bitterly when one is young,

and has not yet learnt to look on such matters philosophically.

Supper was going on when we reached the house, and having hastily donned evening dress, we were shown to the dining-room by an old servant named Thomas, who pompously announced Sir Wilfrid as he flung open the door, and then gripping my arm, said in a stage aside:

‘There ain’t no more room, sir; as it is, I’m putting Sir Wilfrid into the place of Lord Downshire’s chaplain. Luckily the roast had been removed and he’d returned thanks. One can always turn out the chaplain before the sweets are served. You are the secretary, I believe, sir?’ He looked up questioningly as though he would say: ‘Don’t let us have any mistakes; if you are a gentleman of means, say so at once, and I’ll apologise.’

‘Yes, I am the secretary,’ I replied, unable to suppress a smile as I saw the expression of the old man’s face and the relieved air with which he received my answer.

‘Then step this way, sir; you’ll find the parson to keep you company.’

‘But I can’t eat the parson, and I am as hungry as a hunter,’ I suggested, seeing that the fellow was evidently an old family servant and looked capable of taking a joke.

His broad shoulders shook, and he promised to bring me some supper without delay, which was as well, for the chaplain was the most lean and scraggy of men, and even a cannibal would scarce have deemed his bones worth picking. He bowed rather stiffly as I entered.

‘I am the Reverend Ambrose Newfold, chaplain to my Lord Downshire,’ he said pompously. ‘May I ask your name, sir?’

‘I am Michael Derwent, secretary to Sir Wilfrid Lawson, of Isel Hall, Cumberland,’ I replied, glancing

round the somewhat comfortless little room, which contained nothing warmer in the grate than some very curious specimens of stuffed birds, and nothing more edible than cases of eminently dull fossils ranged all round the walls. We had journeyed far that day, and I was both hungry and cold, nor did the savoury odours from the next room help to make matters more pleasant. I yawned prodigiously, which seemed to offend the reverend Ambrose.

‘It is a most unseemly custom,’ he said sourly, ‘that the chaplain should be asked to withdraw when the meat is removed; a great insult to the church in the person of her unworthy representative.’

‘For my part I think you came off very well, sir,’ I said with a laugh. ‘I would willingly dispense with the sweets if only they would bring me a good plate of beef and a tankard of ale.’

‘Sir,’ said the chaplain, ‘I thought of no such carnal matters; it is the insult to the cloth that I resent—the insult to the cloth,—sir.’

‘Oh, hang the insult!’ I replied, chafed by the man’s pettishness. ‘For the matter of that, they have insulted my pen far worse, for I never got a chance of sitting down to table at all. The truth of the matter is, sir, that there was no room, and had not Sir Wilfrid Lawson arrived just at that precise time, you might have said grace without any latent resentment.’

‘Do you suppose, sir,’ said the chaplain angrily, ‘that I hankered after the paltry cakes of the pastry cook?’

‘I ask your pardon; it was perhaps the natural inference of a hungry man,’ I said, dropping into the nearest chair and relapsing into silence. But ill-humour is infectious, and the chaplain’s fit of discontent soon attacked me, so that I fell to wondering gloomily whether it was always to be my lot to take the lowest

place, to see the Henry Brownriggs of the world gaining all that I coveted, and to remain to the end of my days merely a rich man's secretary.

As for the serving-man, he seemed basely to have deserted me, and though hunger is said to be the best sauce, it is apt to make a man decidedly short-tempered, so that each moment as I waited I hated that lean chaplain with a more deadly hatred, and only longed to be rid of the sight of his lantern jaws.

At last there was a sound of voices and steps without, and then the door opened, and in came a lady in primrose-coloured satin, with filmy white lace about her neck and shoulders. She was a brunette, with soft, stag-like eyes, which somehow were sad even when they smiled. I guessed her to be about thirty, but found later on that she was younger than she looked.

'I am afraid, Mr. Newfold,' she said, turning with an apologetic air to the chaplain, 'that old Thomas treated you somewhat unceremoniously. In his anxiety to make ready for Sir Wilfrid Lawson, he hurried you away most abruptly. He is such a good old fellow that we put up with his brusque tongue; he has been with my uncle for five and thirty years.'

The chaplain was obliged to accept the apology, and in the meantime Sir William Denham's niece had become aware of my presence, and the parson seeing her bewilderment, presented me.

'This is Sir Wilfrid Lawson's secretary,' he said in his raucous voice. 'Mr. Michael Derwent, Mistress Mary Denham.'

The lady curtsied very graciously.

'Why,' she exclaimed warmly, 'you have been worse treated even than Mr. Newfold, and have had no supper at all. I shall have to give Thomas a thorough scolding. Come, Mr. Newfold, my aunt is longing for a game of chess with you in the withdrawing-room.'

Please find your own way up while I give orders about Mr. Derwent's supper.'

The chaplain, glad, I am sure, to leave my uncongenial society, hurried upstairs, and in a few minutes Mistress Denham reappeared, followed by the guilty Thomas, who, to make up for his misdeeds, provided me at length with the best that the house could afford, waiting upon me with sedulous attention, while Mistress Denham took the chair which the chaplain had vacated and chatted to me in the most friendly and comfortable way about our journey.

In what her great charm lay I have never been able to tell. She was not to be compared for one moment in beauty with Audrey Radcliffe, and her face, though sweet and winning, had quite lost its youthfulness. I think it must have been her frank friendliness and the consciousness that she had a large share of womanly wisdom that so won me to her. No other woman ever held just the same place in my life that she was destined to fill. For Audrey Radcliffe an undying and passionate love brought me as much pain as rapture; for Mrs. Radcliffe I had a genuine affection, but it was tempered by a certain resentment, for I knew that the betrothal of her daughter to Henry Brownrigg had been to a great extent a matter of her own arrangement. Then there was Lady Lawson, who had always been most kind to me, but who was naturally much absorbed by her own children and the claims of her great household.

In Mistress Mary Denham I for the first time came across one who seemed almost as much alone in the world, as far as near relations went, as myself; this made her able to understand, as others could not understand, many things in my life. There was, moreover, about her what I have never observed in any other woman—a sort of genius for friendship, and a power of throwing herself wholly into the lives of her friends. She seemed

to move in a different region to most women, as though the page of personal desire in the book of her life had been turned while she was yet quite young, and she was now intent only in the lives of other people. It was not in that first evening that I learnt to understand her fully, but it was then that the charm began to work. For certainly part of her fascination was that she in many ways perplexed one, being full of curious contradictions. Surrounded by the friends she had won by her friendliness, yet always somehow giving you the impression of loneliness; dressed like a woman of the world, yet with something in her manner which suggested the simplicity and straightforwardness of a Quaker; frank and genial, yet always beyond a certain point curiously reserved; and quite free from the desire to make an impression, which is the bane of most people.

There was absolutely nothing in our talk of the North road and of the difficulties of the way, of the state of London, and of the recent events, that would be worth setting down, but nevertheless for the first time since I had quitted Hye Hill I was conscious of that rest of mind and heart which had first come to me among the Quakers.

Later on, when we were in the crowded withdrawing-room, where some had betaken themselves to cards, and others to talk, while in one corner a string quartette discoursed sweet music, I,—still watching the wearer of the primrose-satin gown as she moved about among her uncle's guests, with her sweet, restful face,—was carried away in thought to that calm-faced man who had walked down the box-bordered path between the apple-trees in the place I had dreamily mistaken for heaven. Was it, after all, merely a fancy that these two had already reached in some degree that state of heavenly citizenship? that it was this that made them so ready of access, so open-hearted to one who was but

a stranger? Surely nothing else would have made it possible to accept all they gave without reluctance, or hesitation; nothing else could have given me that curious sense of kinship with them.

The old Quaker had doubtless attained to this state while suffering so patiently his long years of imprisonment. But how had this gentle-faced lady gained the serene heights which to one in the midst of the battle looked so unattainable?

There was much talk that evening of the festivities that were to take place on the 5th of November, the anniversary of the King's landing at Brixham, and Sir Wilfrid, to my no small content, not only arranged that I should attend him when he went to Whitehall, but carried me off the very next morning to a tailor specially recommended by Mistress Denham's cousin, Rupert.

How it was that while desperately miserable about Audrey's betrothal, and thirsting to avenge my mother's honour, and distracted by the wildest visions of what the future might bring, I could yet find satisfaction in the colour of a vest or the cut of a doublet, or the fineness of a lace cravat, I know not. But so it was; and I am fain to confess that I took keen pleasure in donning for the first time a court suit of tawny-brown velvet, and silken hose of the approved shade of orange, and a long vest of rich cream satin with innumerable gold buttons, together with fine lace frills and furbelows, and a rakish-looking three-cornered hat on the top of a freshly dressed peruke.

Mistress Denham seemed in good spirits when we set out on the evening of the fifth. She wore a very beautiful dress of flame-coloured brocade; her brown hair was turned back from the forehead and dressed high over a cushion according to the fashion then prevailing, and about her slender throat she wore a row of fine pearls. Nothing could have been less Quakerlike than such

attire, and yet, as ever, she made me think of the Society of Friends, and the necklace made me think of that poem—‘The Perle’—which some set down to the great Chaucer; so that all the evening I was haunted by the lines—

*‘He grant us to be His servants leal,
And precious pearls for His pleasure.’*

‘It is all so different, so happily different to the Whitehall I can remember in King Charles’ time, seven years ago,’ she said to me as we entered the great gallery, which was thronged with people. ‘And yet, in spite of all King William’s good intentions, the strict orders he gave for toleration to be shown towards Papists and Nonconformists, his repeal of the hearth tax, and his honest endeavour to make the Whigs and the Tories work together for the real good of England, he is greatly misunderstood and seems far from popular.’

We were greeted just then by Rupert Denham’s brother-in-law, a young barrister named Wharncliffe, whom I had already met at the house in Norfolk Street. Mistress Mary Denham fell into conversation with his pretty wife, who was one of her closest friends, and Mr. Wharncliffe began to tell me how Parliament had reversed the attainders of Colonel Algernon Sydney, of Lord Russell, and of the Lady Alice Lisle. I had heard from the Denhams how some years ago he had well-nigh lost his life in Newgate while they tried by every means short of actual torture to make him give evidence against Colonel Sydney, and could understand how keen an interest he would take in this act of reparation. Only it saddened one to see that evil can never be really undone; the hardships he had endured in prison had sown the seeds of disease in him, and it was easy to tell by his over-bright eyes, by the unnatural beauty of his colouring, and by the soft but troublesome cough which

seemed habitual to him, that he was already in consumption. However, for the present he was as happy as a man well can be; was the father of three delicate but very winsome little children, and was blessed with a most charming wife, who looked capable of taking the utmost care of him, and prolonging his life by her tender care to the longest possible span. He was a pleasant companion, and pointed out to me many well-known people as we stood there waiting for the entrance of the royal party.

‘There goes my Lord Devonshire,’ he said, indicating a magnificently dressed nobleman clad in orange and green. ‘He is Lord Steward of the household, and is a great lover of balls. One of his greatest annoyances is that the court balls cannot be given in the splendid rooms which King Charles built for the Duchess of Portsmouth, for the Princess Anne, at the Revolution, got King William to promise them to her, and though the Queen did her utmost to get her to relinquish them, she will not yield; in fact, she has for her private use not only that splendid suite, but the Cockpit as well. Whether ’tis her doing or the doing of her favourite Lady Marlborough, no one really knows, but between them they have certainly obtained a very goodly heritage.’

‘Who is that handsome Dutch boy?’ I inquired, glancing at a youth who passed close to us in eager conversation with a young Irishman.

‘That,’ said Mr. Wharncliffe, ‘is young Arnold van Keppel, the King’s favourite page, and his companion is Dillon, the *aide-de-camp* to my Lord Marlborough. According to van Keppel, the King hates Lord Marlborough and speaks of him as “that vile man.” Like most of the silent and quiet people in the world, his Majesty has a pretty insight into character and well knows with whom he has to deal. Ah! the doors are

being thrown open; the King and Queen are about to come in.'

I looked eagerly in the direction to which all eyes turned, and frankly confess that at first a chill of surprise and disappointment ran through me; for the deliverer who had responded to the appeal of the oppressed people of England, the conqueror who had freed us from the despotism of King James, was a little, sickly-looking man with that air of constant suffering which is too often mistaken for crossness, and in addition one of those careworn brows which betoken a mind incessantly harassed by vexatious details. He was much shorter than the Queen, who, in her white-satin robes, orange-lined train, and magnificent diamonds, seemed to tower above him. She was strikingly handsome, and had just the lively charm of manner in which his Majesty was so singularly lacking, but from the tone of the talk that I heard later on I doubt if she was really any more popular than her husband; for after effusively welcoming the new King and Queen people seemed mercilessly ready to criticise them. If the King looked grave he was instantly dubbed a sullen, ill-mannered Dutchman. If her Majesty exerted herself to be animated and gay, people promptly said she was a most heartless daughter, and ought to be mourning over the sad plight in which her poor father found himself.

They seemed quite to forget that the English themselves had summoned the new monarchs to their aid and, by their own act, had placed them on the throne which King James had deserted when he found that his tyranny would no longer be tolerated.

Dancing now began, and the pleasure of watching it had not had time to pall upon me, when my attention was distracted by feeling upon me the piercing gaze of a pair of eyes which seemed to have in them a most curious influence. Shifting a little in my place, I looked

across the gallery, compelled almost against my will to meet the gaze of a gentleman several years my senior. He wore a suit of black velvet laced with silver, and a light peruke, and there was something in his face which attracted and interested me.

‘Who is that gentleman standing close to my Lord Portland?’ I inquired.

‘Why, that,’ replied Mr. Wharncliffe, ‘is a man I am surprised to see here. His name is Calverley, and, though ’tis not generally known, I have good reason to believe that he is a Papist. At the chambers next to mine in King’s Bench Walk, there is a barrister named Winter—as good a fellow as breathes, but hampered not a little in his career because he comes of the well-known Papist family of that name. I was once introduced to yonder gentleman in his rooms, and have passed him many times on the staircase. His name is Calverley.’

‘Why, then he must be the very man to whom I brought a book from Father Noel,’ I exclaimed. ‘See, he is coming this way. I beg you to introduce me to him.’

The stranger bowed very courteously, and thanked me for the packet I had left in Villiers Street,—he had been out when I delivered it.

‘I should have known you were from the north country,’ he said pleasantly. ‘None of these wretched southerners can say their r’s properly. And how is my friend Father Noël?’

‘I left him well, sir.’

‘And his patron—let me see what is the old gentleman’s name,—Radcliffe, is it not?’

‘Yes, sir,—a kinsman of my Lord Derwentwater’s named Sir Nicholas Radcliffe.’

‘To be sure, I remember now, and indeed have met the old gentleman many years ago. How does he fare?’

‘He ages fast, sir. I fear we shall soon have his

brother inheriting the estate, for old Sir Nicholas can't in nature last much longer. The brother, they say, is a very different man and goes in overmuch for plots and politics. However, he'll not be on Lord's Island, for that really belongs to my Lord Derwentwater, and he lives wholly at Dilston, and would not, I am sure, disturb Mistress Radcliffe and her daughter.'

In the pleasure of finding one who knew the Radcliffes even very slightly, I had wandered on perhaps rather rashly, considering how little I knew this gentleman. There was, however, something about him which tended to draw one out. He had a frank, pleasant manner, which inspired confidence, and I felt attracted to him. I knew that Mr. Wharncliffe's surmise as to his religion was perfectly true, for Father Noel had himself told me that he was a Catholic. But there was, after all, nothing so very strange in his being present at court, for every English gentleman had from time immemorial possessed the right of free entrance at Whitehall, both during the King's dining-hour and at any special diversion. Probably he came merely out of curiosity. While I mused over this, I was startled by a sudden question from the stranger:

'Then old Sir Nicholas Radcliffe's granddaughter is next in succession to her great-uncle, I suppose?'

'Yes,' I replied, 'for he has no living child.'

'I heard a rumour that she was betrothed to a most bigoted Protestant. How does Sir Nicholas take that?'

The colour flamed up into my face.

'He likes it, as most folks do, very ill,' I answered shortly.

Mr. Calverley lowered his voice.

'What! are you one of us?'

I shook my head.

'No, but I loathe Henry Brownrigg's bigotry.'

And, as I spoke, all the miserable recollections that

had for a time been driven from my mind by the novelty of the present scene, came crowding in upon me. I thought of Audrey singing 'See the chariot at hand here of love'; I thought of our talk by the shore and of Henry Brownrigg's interruption; I thought of the words the Under-Sheriff had used by Castle Hill, and of the expression on his face as he rode away to Keswick after the Quaker's intervention.

What a hard world it was! And how soon the splendour of Whitehall, and the charms of music and dancing and gay attire, palled upon one!

'The King, they say, is longing to be with his army in Ireland,' said someone standing near me to his companion. 'He is more at home in camp than at court, and that's the honest truth. Did you ever see anything more like a fish out of water?'

So that was the meaning of the restless, unhappy expression on King William's face! It was this horrible atmosphere of hollow merriment, of meaningless splendour, that was stifling him. It was the thought of the hateful bigotry and party-spirit with which he was everywhere confronted that gave him that almost despairing expression. He longed to be fighting with foes that could be fairly faced and frankly dealt with. A war of words was intolerable to him; he craved to be handling his sword. A strong wave of sympathy with the silent and much misunderstood sovereign swept over me. After all, was the Quaker right? Surely the fighting instinct was a noble one. Surely his doctrine of passive resistance was only a counsel of perfection, never meant at all for the world at large.

I was startled back to the present by finding Mr. Calverley's curiously attractive eyes fixed intently upon me, so that I could not help wondering how long he had been reading my face like a book.

'The scene impresses you, Mr. Derwent,' he said with

a smile which was wholly kind and free from sarcasm. 'I would give something to see it with eyes as young as yours.'

'People always take it for granted that to be young means to be happy. It's a confounded mistake,' I said bitterly.

But before my companion could make any reply I was summoned by Sir Wilfrid Lawson, and, following my patron, I saw Mr. Calverley no more that night.

CHAPTER XVI

‘OUR friend, I think, has a grievance,’ said Mr. Calverley, turning with a smile to Hugo Wharncliffe. ‘’Tis a pity. ’Twill sour him. He’s over-young for a grievance.’

Hugo Wharncliffe laughed.

‘Few can pick and choose the time for such things,’ he said. ‘And as for that poor fellow Derwent, his grievance, I understand, began when he first drew breath. They say he was a foundling.’

‘If he never has a worse grievance than that he’ll survive,’ said Mr. Calverley, fidgetting with a ravelled bit of silver lace on his doublet which offended his eye. ‘He has been well educated, and is in the service of a kindly gentleman—what more does he wish? No, no, depend upon it, there’s a nearer grievance than that to make a fellow of twenty-one wear the look he wears. There’s a woman in the case, and a hated rival. I know something of the rival, and detest him as cordially as I fancy our friend does. Possibly I may be able to put a spoke in his wheel, and so aid Mr. Derwent. What a small world it is, and how we all jostle up against one another! I like that young fellow, and must see more of him.’

With that he passed on to other topics, and before very long left Whitehall.

Hugo Wharncliffe turned then to his friend Mary Denham.

‘That Mr. Calverley seems much taken with Sir Wil-

frid's secretary. If you have any influence with him it would be kind to warn him that Calverley is strongly suspected of being a Jacobite.'

'You mean that he had better not get intimate with him?' asked Mary.

'He ought to be on his guard,' said Hugo Wharncliffe. 'Without being a bigot, one can be prudent as to intercourse with those who are under suspicion. Besides, to tell the truth, Mr. Calverley is a dangerously persuasive talker, and from the look of that young fellow, I fancy he is just in the state when a very slight touch might send him in the wrong direction.'

'But he will have Mary for his friend,' said little Mrs. Wharncliffe with a look of happy confidence in Mistress Denham's influence. 'I'll warrant her to outweigh the most persuasive of Jacobites. As for me, I think it is quite clear that the poor boy is in love. Did you not see how he coloured up like a girl when Mr. Calverley spoke of Mistress Radcliffe?'

'So thinks Mr. Calverley, and he even knows the hated rival,' said Hugo Wharncliffe with a smile. 'I heard him say as much but now. I wish I could make the fellow out, but he is deep.'

'Who? Mr. Derwent?' asked Mary Denham.

'No, no, he is as honest and straightforward as the day; it was the mysterious Mr. Calverley I meant. One can't help liking him, yet he is not a man I should readily trust.'

Michael Derwent, being some years younger and knowing far less of the world, took much longer to discover the shortcomings hidden beneath Mr. Calverley's very winning exterior. It chanced that the lawsuit which had brought Sir Wilfrid Lawson to town took far longer than had been anticipated, and all through the winter and the spring they remained in London, owing to the endless delays of the lawyers. During

this time Michael saw much of his new friend, sometimes at his rooms in Villiers Street and sometimes in the chambers of Mr. Winter, the young barrister who had been mentioned by Hugo Wharncliffe. Here he often met a very pleasant and clever friend of Father Noel's named Anthony Sharp, a middle-aged and highly cultivated scholar, and one of the keenest arguers conceivable. The two younger men, as a rule, simply listened to the discussions between Anthony Sharp and Mr. Calverley. They debated numberless questions, but more often than not the discussion turned upon some point of difference between the Anglican and Roman churches. On these occasions it always happened that, for the sake of argument, Mr. Calverley would take a brief for the English Church, and Anthony Sharp would, with wonderful skill, crush his argument beneath the overpowering weight of a merciless logic.

Now, as Hugo Wharncliffe had shrewdly surmised, Michael was just at this time in a state when a very slight touch might send him hopelessly wrong. He was unhappy; he had good cause for suspecting the genuineness of a great deal of the noisy Protestantism which he came across, to be nothing more than place-hunting under the cloak of religion; and he hated with all his heart a certain very aggressive Protestant who performed the duties of Under-Sheriff in Cumberland with more zeal than charity.

In old times Father Noel had done his best to make a convert of him, but had failed. Now, however, in the bitterness of his isolation, in the restlessness which is the sure symptom of a sore heart, there was undoubtedly something that attracted him in a church which would, so to speak, take you in and do for you, save you from all personal responsibility, think for you and care for you, exacting nothing but filial obedience in return. Surely, too, even in that thought of filial obedience

there was a charm to one who all his life had been a waif.

One day early in April there arrived in Norfolk Street a letter from Father Noel directed to Michael. He read it at first with shocked surprise, then with a curious stirring of the heart.

‘You have received bad news?’ asked Mary Denham, who happened to be attending to her pet birds in a small aviary which opened out of the study.

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘Mrs. Radcliffe has died. She had never wholly recovered from an accident last year in a coach near Penrith, but the end was very sudden and unexpected.’

‘The poor daughter! What will she do?’ said Mary.

‘I suppose for the present she will remain with her grandfather,’ said Michael, the tell-tale colour rising to his brow. Father Noel tells me that the marriage was to have taken place at Easter, but is now of course postponed for a while.’

‘Poor girl! how desolate she must be! And she will feel doubly alone because in matters of religion she thinks differently to her grandfather.’

‘Nay,’ said Michael. ‘It is in trouble that we see how slight are the differences betwixt us.’

‘I like your thought that, as far as may be, we should live at unity with each other, but unity is the fruit of love and toleration, and has nought to do with uniformity, which is a matter of outward ordinances and differing beliefs, and never can come in this world.’

‘Yet in uniformity there would be peace,’ said Michael wearily. ‘One grows sick of these strivings as to party questions,—these miserable divisions.’

‘The peace of a hard and fast uniformity would be the peace of slavery—of death,’ said Mary Denham. ‘There will always be differences of view, for men are not turned out in one mould. Surely, as the proverb

has it, 'twill ever be "Many men, many minds." It is not a *system*, but a *spirit* that will bring peace; not a church where all think alike and use precisely the same ceremonies, but the spirit of love.'

He looked into her clear, shining eyes; they seemed to him like wells of light, so deep yet so calm were they in their brightness. Was it possible that this woman had more true insight into the problem that was filling his heart than such a ripe scholar, such a trained debater, as Anthony Sharp?

'I sometimes think,' he said with apparent irrelevance, 'that it would be far the happiest thing for Audrey Radcliffe if she came to share her grandfather's views.'

'How can that be?' said Mary Denham. 'If, as we think, his views are mistaken, then it cannot be for her real happiness.'

'It would, at any rate, save her from a miserable marriage—a marriage that would be hell on earth.'

'But to save a great pain would you do wrong?' said Mary.

'I think there are cases where it might be permissible,' he replied, as though feeling his way in the dark along a strange path.

'But once allow that we may do evil that good may come and there is an end of all morality,' she said; and now there was some trace of agitation in her manner. Her breath came quickly, her eyes dilated, her colour rose, for instinctively she knew that she was fighting for a soul,—struggling to resist the devil's own doctrine. When such a time as that comes to man or woman one of life's keenest delights is felt, and just as a soldier glories in being called to some difficult task so the spirit exults in being used for so glorious an end.

Yet, though her words were clear and forceful, it was not the power of her argument which arrested Michael;

it was rather a sort of bewildered gratitude and surprise when the realisation broke upon him that she cared intensely that he should not swerve from the absolutely true, the absolutely right. From the first he had known that she was singularly free from that petty craving for attention which characterises so many women; she had always been to him a perfectly frank and unselfish friend. But now he understood how greatly she cared for him, how divine a thing this friendship was which, in the time of his desolation, had brought fresh interest into his life.

He began to tell her of Anthony Sharp, and of the way in which his arguments were always recurring to his mind; how it had seemed to him that there was something of devotion in the life of a good Catholic, like Winter of the Inner Temple, which was lacking in men of their own church.

‘But surely,’ urged Mary, ‘devotion is not the special characteristic of any one set of men. We have saintly men in the English Church, like Bishop Ken and Dean Tillotson; and saintly Quakers, like your friend at Keswick and like George Fox.’

‘Yes, that’s true,’ said Michael reflectively. ‘And how they are misunderstood! I was walking along the Strand the other night with Mr. Calverley and a Jacobite friend of his who was calling the Dean of St. Paul’s every vile name you can think of.’

‘Are you wise to be thus mixed up with Jacobites?’ said Mary Denham thoughtfully.

‘Oh, it was merely by chance that I fell in with this gentleman,’ said Michael. ‘As for Mr. Calverley, I have never heard him talk of politics. I remember once before you warned me. But I assure you King James is never so much as mentioned in Mr. Winter’s chambers. He is a very quiet, peaceable man, and has good reason to avoid plots or conspiracies of any sort.’

Mary was silent for a minute. All this might be true enough, but she could not rid herself of the impression that a strong effort was being made to win Michael Derwent over to the Romish Church. It was quite evident that unless they had both great desire to gain him as an adherent and confidence in the likelihood of his conversion, they would not at this particular time have dared to risk admitting him to the discussions which he had described to her. She knew, moreover, how likely it was that in a state of sore-hearted restlessness he would catch at anything which seemed to offer a sheltered haven, without pausing to consider whether it was a safe refuge, or the best and truest to be had. As she mused over the danger which threatened him it occurred to her that in the utterances of a man like the much-persecuted George Fox, with his intense spirituality, his profound belief in the divine guidance of each soul, he might find what he just at this time needed to restore his mental balance.

‘I should like to see Mr. Fox,’ she said. ‘I wish you would some day take me to the meeting-house in Grace-church Street. The Quakers are able now to meet without any molestation, and Mr. Wharncliffe told me strangers were freely admitted.’

Michael laughed a little.

‘What! Would you go all the way to the city and then perchance sit for a couple of hours and hear no single word? They do not speak unless the Spirit moves them.’

‘I should like to go, all the same,’ said Mary. ‘Tomorrow is Wednesday, or what they call Fourth day, so there is sure to be a meeting. Let us go and see what it is like.’

‘There is no one like them when one is in trouble,’ said Michael thoughtfully. ‘I only wish that Audrey may see something of her old kinsfolk at Keswick. But

that is scarce likely. Mrs. Brownrigg will be for ever fussing round her, and will perhaps carry her off to Millbeck Hall.'

He sighed with a fierce impatience and began to pace the room restlessly.

'Tell me about Mistress Audrey,' said Mary Denham. 'Is she young?'

'She is my age; we were reared by the same foster-mother, brought up in the same place. There was never a time when I did not love her, and she,—she would have cared had it not been for my cursed ill-luck. For just as I had well-nigh proved my birth we were separated, and they betrothed her to a man that I know to be nothing but a great hectoring bully, a fellow she would never have accepted had it not been that he is that sort of prize-ox type of man that women admire.'

'Does her grandfather know Mr. Brownrigg well?'

'Yes, knows him and detests him, but he has no power to interfere, for it was expressly arranged in his son's will that any children born of the marriage should be brought up in the English Church. How sick one grows of all these religious disputes and party wranglings! It half inclines one to have done with all struggling after truth, and hand oneself over, body and soul, to some father confessor who would arrange matters comfortably. Why think for yourself if you can think by proxy?'

His tone had been cynical. Hers, as she replied, was sweet, yet so eager that the contrast was extraordinary.

'But why draw water from a pump in the public street, often in past times found defective and dangerous, when in your own dwelling-place you have the fountain-head?'

CHAPTER XVII

THEY were interrupted just then, but the words haunted Michael all that day and indeed for many days after. Mary Denham, with her clear insight, had seen rightly the peril which at that moment threatened him. James Calverley, the scheming man of the world; Anthony Sharp, the scholar and theologian; and Winter, the saintly devotee, who honestly believed that all who were not members of his own church were doomed to unending torments, were doing their very utmost to win over the young north-countryman to their own views. Their tact and judgment were wonderful, and probably their efforts would have been successful had it not been for another and stronger influence which they had not reckoned on.

Brought up among the hills and dales of Cumberland and inheriting from his mother one of those spiritual minds which turn more readily to the mystical rather than the sensuous side of things, Michael had inevitably been attracted by the inwardness of the Quaker teaching. And when he found himself on 'Fourth day' sitting among those quiet 'Friends' who were neither praying nor preaching, but just waiting upon God, all the restlessness seemed to be smoothed out of him. Rebellion against God's ordering was a thought that died in this atmosphere, and the same calmness which was clearly visible in the faces of the Quakers, gradually stole over him, also, as he waited there in the unbroken silence.

Presently there stood up a woman who prayed with great simplicity and earnestness; the whole meeting stood and prayed silently with her. Then they sat down again, and all was still once more.

They had prayed for all who walked in darkness, for all seekers after truth, and woven in now with scraps and shreds of the arguments that had been of late so much pressed upon him, there came the remembrance of the quiet room at Hye Hill and of Nathaniel Radcliffe's voice saying the words—'Be loyal to Him whose love is the unfailing fount of strength.'

Presently, in the quiet building there came a very faint stir as of people roused from an inward to an outward listening. All eyes were turned upon an old man dressed in brown leather who had risen from his place. He was tall, and although much crippled by rheumatism, and aged by the persecutions he had for so many years suffered, there was something commanding in his presence. His snow-white hair, parted in the middle, over a low, broad forehead, hung in scanty locks about his shoulders, and the massive, large-featured face was relieved from sternness by the piercing sweetness of the large dark eyes.

Michael knew at once that this was George Fox, for he had seen the Quaker for a few minutes when delivering to him Nathaniel Radcliffe's packet. He listened to the sermon with some curiosity, wondering how this man, who had learnt to endure every sort of ill treatment without retaliating, would speak. He had none of the cultivation of Anthony Sharp, and yet in what he said, and in his intense earnestness, there was something which rivetted the attention of all hearers. He spoke on the text 'Be still and know that I am God,' begging the Friends to keep their minds retired to the Lord, to make an effort to do so, to control all over-eagerness in telling and hearing news, since in the lower region all

news was uncertain and nothing stable; while in the higher region—the kingdom of Christ—all things were stable and sure, and the news always good and certain, because Christ ruled there. Neither should they seek after earthly guidance, but rather go straight to Christ Himself. All men had the Inner Light, and by it their consciences should be enlightened, and they should be led both to see their sin and to be healed of it.

There was only one way in which to gain true independence, true peace, and that was perfect trust in the divine guidance. If we turned to earthly guides, we should lose that religious reserve which is the rightful and wholesome state for the souls of men, and we should no longer turn the whole force of our wills to keep the mind retired to the Lord. Only by waiting upon God could the strength come which should enable each follower of Christ to go forth and do the work to which he was called; only in silence could we gain clear conviction that a concern was specially laid upon us.

After the sermon they rose once more to pray, and to Michael it all came as a revelation. In George Fox's prayer there was a reverence so profound, an inward realisation of God's presence so wonderful, that it seemed as though he drew all hearts with him into his own heavenly-mindedness. He used very few words and these of a great simplicity, but as though they were carefully weighed and chosen like the words of a poet, and, above all, with a deep, unfailing regard to absolute truth. There were no whining and exaggerated and long-winded confessions of sin, no florid and fulsome ascriptions of praise, no informing the Almighty of what he had or had not done; it was rather the solemn communion of one who speaks heart to heart with the Being he loves and reveres most profoundly.

There was one other point which struck Michael with surprise and admiration. The prayer had been curi-

ously short, as though George Fox took very literally the injunction in Ecclesiastes,—‘Let thy words be few.’

When the congregation dispersed it chanced that the veteran leader caught sight of Michael, whose face was one which it was not easy to forget. He paused and spoke to him for a few minutes, giving him no greeting, for it was against his principles to say ‘Good-morning,’ or to lift his hat, but nevertheless conveying by his whole manner and expression a courtesy so far beyond any conventional forms that it impressed all who met him. His eyes rested tenderly on the young north-countryman, for during his life of wandering he had come to know countless people and was noted for being both a ‘discerner of others’ spirits, and very much a master of his own.’

There was a gentleness and sympathy in his manner which was all the more striking because of his strength, and the severity of which he was capable whenever evil had to be fought against.

‘I would fain journey back to the north with thee,’ he said, ‘and see my wife at Swarthmoor Hall, but the way is over-long for me now. Hast thou found yet the marriage register that ’tis thy desire to find?’

‘No, sir,’ said Michael. ‘I have searched through many registers for the year 1667, but have not yet found it.’

‘Hast thou sought yet in the steeple-house of Dunstan?’

‘Nay, sir, I have not yet been there.’

‘When I saw thy face this morning and remembered thy story there was brought to my mind how that just a year after my release from Scarboro,’ (which took place the very day before the great fire of London), I was walking from the house of Esquire Marsh down Fleet Street, and by the door of the steeple house there stood a bride and bridegroom just about to step into a hackney coach. I know not why the scene lived in my

memory; perchance it was that my own marriage was then in contemplation; also there was something unusual in the face of the bride. Perchance there is a leading in this. Go and search the register for the 1st of seventh month, 1667, and see what entries there are.'

So they parted, and Mary Denham being much inclined to think that they might find this curious coincidence the means of discovering the lost clue, suggested that they should lose no time, but go at once to the Church of St. Dunstan.

A most crabbed old verger reluctantly admitted them to the vestry, and amid incessant grumbling unlocked an oaken chest. It was richly carved with a very quaint design of Eve giving the apple to Adam, and beneath was the inscription, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' which greatly tickled Mary's fancy and made them both laugh. This enraged the verger, who fully believed that they were making game of him.

'If you wish to take copies of a marriage register you'll please to do it with care or not at all,' he said severely. 'There was a couple of gentlemen in here a sen'night since, old enough to have known better, both of them, and they must needs get fooling about with the inkhorn and spilt it all over the page,—a plague upon them! Just look ye there! There's a fine mess for you in a parish register! But, bless you, I made 'em pay for it! They didn't leave this vestry till they'd crossed my hand with gold.'

He chuckled at the remembrance, and Michael and Mary bent over to look at the damaged page.

'Why, 'tis the very date, 1st September, 1667!' exclaimed Mary.

Michael's heart seemed to stand still, for there was the entry he had been seeking, but so damaged by the ink stains, and by an effort to scratch them out, that the name of the bridegroom, the very name which he

desired to learn, was illegible. The rest was all perfectly clear, and ran as follows :

‘On this 1st day of September, 1667, was solemnised a marriage between and Lucy Carleton, spinster, daughter of Robert Carleton, gent. of Carleton Manor, Penrith, at this Church of St. Dunstan, according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, by me Joseph Baynes, clerk in holy orders,

in the presence of Christopher Vane, of Raby Castle,
County Durham,
and Zachary Stevens, ye parish clerk of St. Dunstan’s.’

‘Clearly the first name must have been “John,”’ said Mary Denham, pointing to the faint indications of the first and last letters. ‘Now, if only it had been some out-of-the-way name! But John! why, it is no guide at all!’

‘When was this confounded mess made?’ asked Michael, ‘and who were the gentlemen?’

‘They give no names, sir,’ said the verger, ‘and’t was a sen’night since. One of them, sir, was just about your height and build, and might ha’ been fifty or thereabout; the other seemed a bit younger, and I reckoned ’un the more learned of the two.’

‘They took a copy of this particular marriage certificate?’

‘Well, sir, I’m no reader myself, so I can’t say, but I know it was on this page.’

‘Who is the witness named in the register,—Zachary Stevens?’

‘That be my father, sir.’

‘Can I see him?’

‘Bless you, no, sir. Poor old man, he’s been a-lyin’ out there in the churchyard these fifteen year. Why, he’d be more’n a hundred if so be that he was alive.’

‘There seems a fate against me!’ said Michael with

an impatient sigh, and putting some silver into the verger's hand, he turned to leave the church, feeling terribly downhearted.

'One thing is clear,' said Mary Denham, 'that was no genuine accident with the inkhorn. And there had been a deliberate scratching out of your father's name. Had the old verger been able to read he would have realised that.'

'Then it must mean that Sir Christopher Vane has communicated with my father,' said Michael. 'He promised that he would do so, and my father must still be anxious to disown me, and has destroyed the only certain legal proof that would have availed me.'

'And yet, nevertheless,' said Mary, 'I think this will prove, as Mr. Fox said, "a leading." It, at any rate, shows you that for the present you can do no more, that you must just be still and wait for more light.'

They had walked as far as Temple Bar, when their talk was interrupted by a sound of street brawling; a crowd had gathered about an extremely noisy and half-intoxicated gentleman, who was singing at the top of his voice one of the familiar Jacobite songs of the day:

'Ken ye how he requited him ?
Ken ye how he requited him ?
The dog has into England come,
And ta'en the crown in spite of him !
The rogue he shall not keep it lang ;
To budge we'll make him fain again.
We'll hang him high upon a tree ;
King James shall hae his ain again !'

At this moment the singer was confronted by a messenger, who showed him a warrant which he was quite incapable of reading, and marched him off to the Tower, amid the mingled cheers and groans of the crowd.

'Why, that is a fellow I have often seen with Mr.

Calverley—young Sir Arthur Bell. So he, too, is a Jacobite! I wonder how long he will be clapt up.'

Mary was wishing in her heart that he would be more careful as to the people he mixed with, but she was too wise to press the matter further just then.

'Do you know,' said Michael, 'what it is to care not a straw for anything in the world? To be indifferent as to what happens? To find everything one dull, dead level?'

'Yes,' she said, 'I know very well what you mean.'

'Since finding that damaged register I feel that there's no more to be done; my life is over, at least all that makes it worth living,' he said with profound dejection. 'What did you do when you were in like case?'

'You will find, I think, that other people's interests are put into your life, and you'll begin to care for them instead. By the bye, there is a matter in which you could help me very much. You remember how, in the winter, we had that appeal from the Bishop of London to help the Protestant Vaudois, who had been obliged to fly from their homes because of the persecution of the Duke of Savoy and the French? There is much need of a man who understands accounts and business matters, at which, to tell the truth, the clergy are notoriously bad, and the ladies nothing to boast of. Much has been given in charity. If you could spare us some of your free time you would be doing a very kindly deed.'

Michael could not refuse such a request, though at that moment he felt perfectly hard and callous as to the sufferings of the Vaudois. But the work in itself did him good; moreover, as Mary had known would be the case, it brought him into contact with men like Dean Tillotson, Hugo Wharnccliffe, and Mr. John Evelyn, who was staying just then with his family in Soho Square.

CHAPTER XVIII

‘So far it has been a dead failure,’ said James Calverley, closing the shutters of his sitting-room in Villiers Street, and proceeding in a leisurely fashion to get a light with flint and steel and kindle the two candles which, in very ill-cleaned silver candlesticks, stood on the table. ‘Before the fellow can be of much service he must be won over to the true faith. I thought the last debate had nearly converted him, but since Easter I have not set eyes on him; he deliberately avoids me, and even when asked to come here writes an excuse.’

‘There is some other influence at work,’ said Anthony Sharp, ‘and I think I can tell you what it is. That dark-eyed niece of Sir William Denham’s hath introduced him to the good folk who are bent on relieving the heretic Vaudois. I despair of him now, for they’ll stuff his ears with gruesome tales of cruelty, and he will conclude that we are all friends; for somehow your good Protestant always manages to forget that he too can be a persecutor when he has a chance. Such an one will talk very big about the fires of Smithfield, but will manage to forget the horrible cruelties perpetrated in Ireland, to say nothing of the murder of my Lord Stafford, as innocent a man as ever breathed.’

‘You must have another try at him,’ said Calverley, ‘for it is essential that he should somehow be converted.’

‘That, my dear friend, is more easily said than done,

particularly now that he is hand and glove with Dean Tillotson.'

'Tillotson? Perhaps the worthy Dean will only comfort him as they say he did the Queen,—I mean the Dutchman's wife,—with a sermon on hell.'

'Perhaps,' said Anthony Sharp, with an odd motion of the eyebrows. 'But if, as they say is the case, Tillotson holds that the torments of hell are not endless, then you may be sure he will attract a fellow of Michael Derwent's nature. Some may be won by fear, but he is not of that make. The doctrine of never-ending evil and suffering revolts his sense of justice, and you may be quite sure that Tillotson will net him.'

'Perhaps he only sees the Dean about this Vaudois business.'

'No; I saw them together a sen'night since, walking to and fro in the half-built new St. Paul's, in deep talk. By stepping behind some scaffolding, I contrived to catch a sentence now and then as they passed, and heard the Dean arguing against an infallible church, and speaking outrageous things of His Holiness the Pope. The church, he argued, was but the congregation of faithful men, liable to err, and as yet unfinished and incomplete, just like the building in which they walked. It was built up, not out of rules and dogmas and ceremonies, but of the lives of Christian men and women; and there, to do him justice, he said many excellent and practical things to young Derwent, for practical charity hath a large place in the Dean's teaching, and accounts no doubt for his enormous influence. It's not that the man is a great scholar or a profound theologian—his best friends would scarce claim that for him—but he certainly is zealous in good works, and, depend upon it, his influence over young Derwent will last. I can do no more for you.'

'Then the fellow must remain Sir Wilfrid Lawson's

nameless secretary,' said James Calverley with a shrug of the shoulders. 'No one can say I haven't done my utmost to save him.'

'True, and, even as it is, you may find him of use some day,' said Anthony Sharp. 'Have you a lemon here? I might write a letter to Nevil Payne and tell him how matters progress. I almost wonder Enderby hasn't returned from St. Germain's by this time; he has been longer gone than I thought for.'

'Ay, now that the Dutchman has started for Ireland, the sooner we set our plan agoing, the better,' said Calverley, producing a lemon, which he cut in half, and fetching from a drawer a goose-quill and some sheets of writing paper.

Together the two proceeded to concoct a letter which was carefully written in lemon-juice, and would only become legible on the application of heat. They were still at work, when a tap at the door made Anthony Sharp hastily thrust the quill into his pocket and shuffle the papers under the table-cover. Calverley meantime crossed the room, and flinging the door open, greeted his visitor effusively.

'We were but now talking of you, Mr. Derwent,' he said in that genial, pleasant tone which had from the first won Michael's heart. 'You are too much of a stranger here. Has Sir Wilfrid been keeping you chained to the desk that you have not visited me all this time?'

'No, sir,' said Michael, a little sorry to find Anthony Sharp present. 'But I have been taken up with other things, and have come now to bid you farewell, for we go back to the north on Monday.'

'What! so soon? I am sorry for that,' said James Calverley, thoughtfully.

'There is nothing now to wait for,' explained Michael. 'Sir Wilfrid's lawsuit has come to a successful finish,

and my search after my father's name is an unsuccessful one.'

'How's that?' said Anthony Sharp, scanning the young man's face attentively.

'Why, sir, I have found the marriage in the register at St. Dunstan's, but it had been tampered with, a quantity of ink spilt over it, and the name—just the one name I need—is quite illegible.'

'That does indeed seem a cruel stroke of fate,' said Anthony Sharp. 'But accidents will happen, and maybe you will find other proofs.'

'It was no accident, sir, but design, if I mistake not,' said Michael. 'I firmly believe my father himself to have moved in the matter.'

Calverley had been elaborately slicing up the lemon into a tumbler of water; he looked up now with a smile.

'Most men would be willing enough to have such a fellow for son and heir. What reason can your father have for still disowning you?'

'I know not, sir, unless perchance it is a matter of money, or unless he is ashamed now, after all these years, to face one he did his best to murder.'

'But now, that you have discovered that you were without doubt born in wedlock, why seek further?' said Calverley. 'By your own showing, the meeting could scarce be a pleasant one.'

'Why, sir, I should naturally like to know my own name,' said Michael. 'And were it only for the sake of pleasing my old grandfather at Carleton Manor, I would fain speak a few plain words to the man who so grossly neglected my mother.'

'It is a thousand pities that you dwell so much on what is past,' said Calverley, dropping the straw through which he had been drinking his lemon-water. 'You want some fresh interest in your life. Why not take up politics?'

Michael laughed and shook his head with an air of distaste.

‘They interest me very little,’ he said, ‘and from all I can gather it is hard for a man to keep his honesty if he meddles much with them.’

‘In matters of state,’ said Anthony Sharp, ‘it is not always possible to observe the same distinction between right and wrong that governs the private life of an individual.’

And therewith he started on a long and ingenious argument to prove that strict honesty, perfect justice, is not always possible or even desirable. But somehow through it all Michael seemed to see the face of George Fox the Quaker, with those clear, wonderful eyes, protesting against this devil’s doctrine, and showing how possible it was even here and now to live in the higher region where are to be found whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just.

While Anthony Sharp was still speaking, there came a hasty rap at the door, and without waiting for leave to enter, in walked a young fellow of about five and twenty, dusty and heated and evidently fresh from a long journey. He looked flushed and excited, and was in excellent spirits—quite irrepressible spirits, indeed—for do what they would, neither Calverley nor Anthony Sharp could stop his mouth.

‘I should have been back long before, but the wind was dead against us. I left St. Germain on Saturday,’ he explained, taking a vacant chair beside Michael and facing the other two.

As the name St. Germain was uttered, Michael felt a violent kick under the table from his *vis-à-vis*, and shrewdly surmised that it had been intended for the over-talkative new-comer. A light began to dawn upon him; clearly his friends were in communication with the exiled Queen.

‘So the Oranger has really gone at last,’ said the stranger. ‘Hey! what’s the matter?’ Apparently the kick had reached him this time. ‘Finding you here in close confabulation and with a lemon on the table, I naturally concluded the coast was clear. Who is this gentleman?’

Calverley, who was half-angry, half-amused, gave a keen glance at Michael’s face. ‘This is my friend Mr. Derwent,’ he said. ‘Come and change your travelling dress in my room, Dick, for in truth you are one mass of dust. Then we can sup together and hear your news.’

‘Nay, you shall hear that at the *Globe* Tavern in an hour’s——’

The rest of the sentence was lost, for Calverley contrived to get his talkative friend out into the adjoining room and to close the door with a resounding bang.

Meanwhile Michael turned over in his mind the mysterious words, ‘Seeing you with a lemon on the table, I thought the coast was clear.’ Was the lemon some secret symbol? He looked in perplexity at the untouched half on the plate and at the fragments of peel at the bottom of the empty tumbler. What could it mean? Evidently, too, there was to be a special meeting at the *Globe* Tavern that evening, when the news from St. Germain was to be discussed. Well, he had better go before he heard any more, and taking up his hat, he rose from the table, when just at that moment Calverley returned to the room.

‘I will bid you good-bye, sir,’ he said in a somewhat constrained tone.

‘Not good-bye,’ said Calverley with a cordial handshake; ‘I shall see you again before you go to the north.’

‘I think not,’ said Michael, colouring. ‘Our ways evidently lie apart.’

‘That talkative fellow has betrayed us,’ said Calverley with an air of great annoyance, while Anthony Sharp

scanned with no small interest Michael's expressive face; he could not help wondering whether his conscience would urge him to make public what he could hardly help knowing must be a Jacobite conspiracy of some sort.

'Sir,' said Michael, 'the gentleman certainly talked over-freely, but I was here as your guest, and am surely in honour bound not to take any heed of matters which were not meant for my ears.'

Calverley pressed his hand, and a look of relief crossed his face; then having sent kindly messages to Father Noel, he parted with Michael, and closing the door after him, paced the room in silence.

'We can trust implicitly to him,' said Sharp. 'He will not repeat any of that fellow's remarks. As long as I live I will never employ Enderby again; I believe the fellow was drunk.'

'No, no, but, as usual, careless and excitable. He swore he thought he had seen Mr. Derwent, or someone much like him, at one of our meetings beneath the arches of the Haymarket. After all, it does not matter so far as public affairs go, for Michael Derwent is, as you say, a man of his word and will reveal nothing. Yet I am sorry, too, that he found out the truth. If things go well for us it will not signify, though, and, in truth, if all Enderby says be true, our plans are most promising. Now that the Oranger is off for Ireland and has left his wife to rule alone, we shall have an excellent chance of restoring his Majesty. However, you will hear all presently at the *Globe*. Here, take the papers from under the table-cover, and we will add a postscript to our lemon letter.'

As they wrote, Enderby cautiously opened the inner door and glanced round the room.

'Is the gentleman from the north safely departed?' he asked. 'That's well! I breathe again! Now, gentlemen, let me favour you with the latest lyric!'

And he trolled out in a clear baritone voice the song:

‘Ye Whigs and ye Tories, repair to Whitehall,
And there ye shall see majestical Mall ;
She fills up the throne in the absence of Willy ;
Never was monarch so chattering and silly.’

‘Do have the goodness to remember that you are in England and not in France,’ said Calverley impatiently. ‘If you are anxious to be lodged in the Tower I am not.’

‘What! You don’t think Mr. Derwent will betray us?’ said Enderby in consternation.

‘No, he can hold his tongue, but you apparently can’t,’ said Anthony Sharp severely. ‘Come, gentlemen, we may as well repair at once to the *Globe*, where no doubt our friends will be assembling.’

And so saying, he carefully folded the illegible letter, threw the remains of the lemon into the tumbler, and prepared to go out.

CHAPTER XIX

MICHAEL'S thoughts were far from pleasant as he quitted Villiers Street. To know that a Jacobite conspiracy was on foot was nothing new, for it had long been the news of the town that Queen Mary of Modena was in communication with many zealous adherents of King James both in England and Scotland. Only a short time ago some highly important despatches had been sent over by two men named Fuller and Crone. Fuller had, however, proved false to his trust; on reaching London he turned Government spy and carried his communications straight to King William, who was at his new palace at Kensington. Crone delivered his letters to the plotters, but afterwards, on Fuller's evidence, was arrested and thrown into Newgate, where, however, he steadily refused to reveal what he knew of the plot. He was now lying, as Michael well knew, under sentence of death, but it was thought that he would probably be respited and induced to tell the whole truth. Meantime, King William, unable to delay any longer his departure for Ireland, where his presence was absolutely necessary, had been forced to leave the Queen to rule the distracted country as best she could. He had set out for the war on the very day that Crone was brought up for trial, and those who saw his unmoved, mask-like face little guessed how deeply he felt leaving the Queen in such a perilous time. Only to his friend Lord Portland, and to Burnet—whom he detested but

knew to be faithful—did he reveal the distress he was enduring.

But never perhaps has there been so striking an instance of the way in which a woman can rise to the occasion as is shown by the manner in which Queen Mary ruled in England during one of the most dangerous and trying years the country has ever passed through.

The Jacobite songs might describe her as chattering and silly, might laugh at her pastime of knotting fringes, but those who know the inner history of those difficult times cannot but admire the wonderful ability and judgment which she showed.

On the whole, as he thought over the unsettled state of the country and remembered with a sense of discomfort how much he had been in Mr. Calverley's company, Michael felt glad that they were soon to return to Cumberland, and as he walked along the crowded and evil-smelling streets a longing came over him for the fresh mountain-air of his native place. Avoiding a noisy party of 'Scourers,' who were making merry over the persecution of a poor old watchman, he turned down Norfolk Street, and hearing sounds of music in the withdrawing-room, went upstairs at once. The room was lighted only by two wax candles, which stood on the spinet at the far end. Mary Denham was playing Whitelocke's coranto, and Sir William slept peacefully, with 'The Ornithology of Francis Willoughby, Esq., illustrated by most elegant figures nearly resembling the live birds,' open before him.

'That is an old tune, that my mother used to play,' said Mary, glancing up at him as he appeared. I always have to play it when I stay with my uncle Sir Joscelyn Heyworth at Katterham.'

'You are going there soon, are you not?'

'Yes, I go next week. One begins to long for the

country. You, too, will be glad to leave London and get back to the north.'

'For some things,' he replied, his face clouding a little. 'If one could just get a good blow on the fells and come back! But the thought of settling down there for the rest of one's life does not, I must own, attract me.'

'You look forward too far,' said Mary. 'A good many changes are sure to come before your life is ended. When I think of all we have passed through in the last eight years merely in matters of state, it seems to me that we certainly can't complain of monotony. There were those sad years at the end of King Charles' reign, with all their anxiety, and then the tyranny of King James, and Monmouth's rebellion, and the frightful cruelties of Judge Jeffreys in the west; then the trial of the seven bishops, and the invitation to the present King, and the excitement of the Revolution. We certainly live in stirring days. I wonder what will happen to that poor young Jacobite, Crone.'

'The general opinion is that he will not be able to face death when it actually comes, and will reveal the truth at the last moment,' said Michael.

'However wrong or mistaken he may be, I cannot help but pity him,' said Mary. 'To lie all these weeks in Newgate with death staring him in the face is hard on one so young. This afternoon Lady Temple was here; she is devoted to the Queen, and has been much with her since King William's departure. She told me that Lord Monmouth constantly brings to her Majesty in cabinet council most mysterious letters, which he declares are intercepted by his friend Major Wildman. They are all written in lemon-juice.'

'In lemon-juice?' said Michael, starting.

'Yes, the writing only becomes visible when exposed to heat. But the extraordinary thing is that they con-

tain abstracts of everything done in the cabinet council, of which Lord Monmouth, you know, is a member.'

'To whom are they directed?' asked Michael.

'To M. Contenay at Amsterdam. Her Majesty begins to think that perhaps Lord Monmouth himself contrives them, and wishes to raise doubts and stir up strife in the Queen's council. It must be a terrible time for her; she does not know whom to trust, and everything she does seems to give offence, while all the time Lady Temple says she is breaking her heart over the enforced absence from her husband, and is miserably anxious lest her father should be killed or wounded in Ireland.'

'I think her Majesty need hardly be anxious on that last point,' said Michael with a smile. 'From all one hears, the late King is very unlike his father in personal courage, and will take good care of his own skin, though he will let the poor Irish folk die by the thousand in his cause.'

'She can hardly help being anxious about her own father when her husband is fighting against him. It must be the same terrible struggle that my uncle Heyworth had to face in the civil war, that sad time of divided households. People say the Queen is heartless because when, at the people's invitation, she came to the rescue of England, she put on a bright face as she entered Whitehall and affected a gaiety she was far from feeling. But Lady Temple is her close friend, and she knows that her Majesty has implored King William to take every care of her father's person, and to let all people know that he specially desired no hurt should happen to him.'

'Tis well she has such a sweet-natured friend as Lady Temple. You have taught me in these months, Mistress Denham, that, as the old sage wrote long ago, "A faithful friend is a strong defence."'

She coloured with pleasure at his words.

‘I have good reason to believe in friendship,’ she said as she played on dreamily upon the spinet. ‘As our old Scotch servant says, I have been well “friended” always. And don’t you forget your promise to write to me as soon as you find those moths which Uncle Denham thinks you may discover on the wooded shores of Derwentwater. It will be a rare delight to him if you can send him some, and, moreover, I shall want to know how you fare.’

Just then Sir William woke up, and they fell to talking over the moths in question. He said that his friend the late Mr. Willoughby had died before studying them as he had wished, and now he and Dr. Martin Lister, whose study of spiders was so well known, desired to collect specimens. Mary felt no small satisfaction as she perceived that her efforts had not been altogether in vain, and that she had really roused the young north-countryman from his private troubles into taking interest again in other things.

CHAPTER XX

‘MY dear Audrey, if you would but realise that delays are dangerous!’ said Mrs. Brownrigg with a touch of impatience in her voice. ‘I have tried to hint as much to you times without number, but it seems useless.’

The good lady was not unlike her son; she was large and solid, with very handsome features and a slightly dictatorial tone. And now, as she sat in the parlour at Millbeck Hall watching the pale, downcast face of her future daughter-in-law, she felt not a little irritated.

For Audrey, in her deep mourning, with all the colour flown from her sweet face, and with dark shadows under her eyes, looked very little like a girl who was on the eve of a happy marriage.

‘Indeed, I am sorry for the delay, ma’am,’ she said wistfully, ‘but I should make but a sad wife yet awhile, and should bring little happiness to Henry.’

‘Of that, my dear, you are no fit judge,’ said Mrs. Brownrigg. ‘To my mind you would show greater respect to your mother’s memory by wedding the man she desired you to wed, than in letting yourself pine like this in a grief that is of no avail.’

Audrey kept her eyes upon her embroidery, though they were so full of tears that she could not see the stitches.

‘I promised Henry this morning that our marriage should be in August, as he wishes,’ she said. ‘It could not be before that, for now that Father Noel has

sprained his knee and is invalided, I could not leave my grandfather.'

'I believe that provoking Mr. Noel hurt himself on purpose to postpone the wedding again. You can't deny, Audrey, that both he and your grandfather dislike your wedding a Protestant.'

Audrey sighed. 'They do not understand Henry,' she said. 'And sometimes I think he does not understand them.' Then seeing Mrs. Brownrigg draw herself up with an air of offence, she hastened to add, 'Maybe when we are really married, all things will go more smoothly. Is that five o'clock striking? Then the horses will be coming to the door, and I must not keep them waiting. My two invalids at home will be looking for me.'

Putting on her hat and riding gloves, she went with her hostess to the great front door, and stood in the sunny little garden waiting for her groom, listening half dreamily to Mrs. Brownrigg's parting exhortations, while her eyes rested on the quaint old Latin motto carved above the name of the former owner, Nicholas Williamson, upon the lintel:

'Quorsum? Vivere mori. Mori vivere.'

'Whither? To live (is) to die. To die (is) to live.'

Audrey had reached that stage of sorrow when a supreme indifference to everything in the world falls with numbing influence on the heart. She looked back at Millbeck Hall without the least quickening of the pulses as she remembered that in a short time it was to become her home, and there was much excuse for the impatient and worried look on Mrs. Brownrigg's face as she watched her future daughter-in-law out of sight.

'Now, what in the world possesses that girl I would give much to understand!' she ejaculated, returning to her work in the parlour in no very good humour. 'From love to my son I urge on the marriage, but 'tis

signing my own death warrant, for to be shut up day after day in the same house with a chit who has no more spirit left in her than a broody hen, will make my life a burden.'

The good lady, however, would have endured much for her son, and her hard face softened when later she heard his step without. He came in looking flushed and eager, and asked at once for Audrey.

'Did you not meet her? She rode home with the groom but a little while ago,' said Mrs. Brownrigg. 'She declared she must go back to her two invalids, and truly the way in which she pampers that disguised priest is enough to sicken any good Protestant. My belief is that his injured knee is nothing but a pretext for hindering the wedding.'

'I wish I had not missed her,' said Henry with an air of vexation. 'But I was coming from the other direction and never thought she would leave yet awhile.'

'What is the news? And where have you been?' asked his mother.

'I have been at Wythop Hall with the Fletchers, and there is great news afoot. A Jacobite plot has been discovered, and the Queen and the privy council at Whitehall have ordered the arrest of my Lord Clarendon and many others. It seems, moreover, that John Radcliffe, Sir Nicholas' younger brother and heir, has been one of this accursed gang, and there is a warrant out against him. He has been plotting and carrying on correspondence with St. Germain's these many months in London, but went always under an assumed name. At last he was recognised and his arrest was ordered. Somehow he contrived, however, to escape from London, and it is thought that he will possibly seek shelter with his kinsfolk in the north.'

Mrs. Brownrigg was an astute lady, and she sat up now with eager eyes.

‘It will rest with you, of course, will be your positive duty, to search for this traitor,’ she said.

‘Certainly,’ replied her son. ‘And he will be a clever man if he contrives to escape me. Not only do I hate all these vile plotters, but it would be to my own interest to rid Audrey of this dastardly great-uncle. She would then inherit her grandfather’s estate of Goldrill near Ulleswater.’

‘To be sure,’ said Mrs. Brownrigg, rubbing her hands gently together. ‘I should like to see you the master of Goldrill. ’Tis a beautiful place, and I remember once dining there in the old times when Mrs. John Radcliffe was a bride. ’Tis strange that Sir Nicholas lets such a place stand empty and lives in that half-ruined old house on Lord’s Island, which he only dreams to be his own. A most unpractical, visionary old man. I have no patience with him.’

‘Visionary, yes, but easy enough to manage,’ said Henry Brownrigg complacently. ‘A generous and foolish old man, too. He will be certain to shelter this ne’er-do-weel brother of his.’

‘But how will you find out?’ asked Mrs. Brownrigg.

‘Why, easily enough, mother,’ said Henry with a laugh. ‘The little god Cupid will come to my help, and I shall draw all the information I need from Audrey.’

‘To be sure,’ said his mother. ‘A girl will do anything for love, and I don’t for a moment doubt her love to you, Henry. It is about the only thing left to her, poor lassie; she’s lost her looks and her spirits and all her small talk. But her love to you survives. You were but a foolish fellow ever to be jealous of Michael Derwent.’

‘That *bête noire* of mine is come on the scene once more. Sir Wilfrid is returned from London, and Derwent is to be on St. Herbert’s Isle this summer, looking

after the work on the new house there, and tutoring the children, for it seems that some of the household at Isel Hall are down with the small-pox.'

'Audrey had heard as much, but she clearly takes no interest in her old playmate. Not a muscle of her face moved when I spoke of him.'

'Yes, I don't think I need be jealous,' said Henry. 'To-morrow I will go and see how the land lies with regard to the great-uncle. As you say, a girl will not withhold information from her lover.'

The next day Henry Brownrigg lost no time in visiting Lord's Island, and Audrey gave him so eager and loving a welcome that his heart beat high with hope. They sat together in a little arbour in the shady pleasure, and after beating about the bush for some little time, he made a direct attack on the matter that was filling his thoughts.

'You have no visitors here?' he said, watching her keenly as he put the question.

'No,' she replied, 'none whatever. They tell me Michael has returned from London, but he has not come to see us.'

'I wonder at that,' said Henry.

'I am glad he has not come,' she said wearily. 'I dread seeing people since my mother died. I want no one but you.'

He raised her hand to his lips. Should he tell her of the discovered plot? On the whole, he thought not.

'My dearest heart!' he said tenderly. 'I come to you whenever I can, and indeed I need you now more than ever, for we live in troubled times and my work just now is arduous. You little know how it cheers and helps me to throw all public cares aside and come here to this quiet place and find you waiting for me. You will not mind if I come even more often than I have done hitherto?'

‘Mind?’ she said with a little shy caress. ‘Why, no, Henry, your coming is the one thing that cures my heartache.’

‘I shall be much in Keswick during the next few weeks,’ he said, ‘and will make a point of coming whenever I can. And do not forget, dear heart, that at Lammas-tide you will be my bride, and that next Sunday our banns are to be read in Crosthwaite Church. You have told your grandfather that?’

‘Yes, I told him last night, and he consents, though liking but ill to lose me,’ said Audrey.

‘Well, well, that is but natural,’ said her lover. ‘And, after all, Millbeck Hall is no very great distance; you will often see him.’

He left the island in good spirits, feeling that there would be no difficulty in learning the whole truth from his betrothed should John Radcliffe seek shelter in the house.

Audrey watched him row back in the direction of Keswick, feeling happier than she had done for some time. There was something in Henry Brownrigg’s strength which comforted her; and to-day she had noticed in his manner a warmth and eagerness that touched her sad heart, rousing it from its grief, and kindling once more a gleam of hope in the life that lay before her. After all, was she not young? It was impossible to dwell for ever in the happiness that was past. Perhaps joy awaited her in that wedded home at Millbeck; perhaps Mrs. Brownrigg was, after all, right, and she would most truly show her love to her mother by making the very utmost of such happiness as might fall to her share.

There was much to brighten her life in the prospect of Henry’s love and protection; then, too, God might send her the blessed gift of children. In many ways, as she sat there dreaming over the possibilities of the

future, her outlook grew wider and more sunshiny, till something of its former youth and beauty stole back to her face, and the old gardener, as he approached her, was quick to note the change.

‘Bless her!’ he said to himself. ‘She’s like her ainsel’ once more. Good-mornin’, mistress. Hae ye time to be cuttin’ the lavender? It be fine and dry now, and by night I’m thinkin’ we shall hae rain.’

‘Why, to be sure, Jock. I am but idling here in the arbour,’ said Audrey with a smile; and going to the house, she returned in a snowy apron, carrying a large flat basket and a pair of scissors to clip the lavender. Jock heard her singing softly as she set about her work, and had a very shrewd suspicion of the direction in which her thoughts had turned; for, as the fragrant, mauve spikes were laid in the basket, Audrey involuntarily began to picture her fine new linen and the great chest where her bridal clothes were stored.

CHAPTER XXI

LATE on the evening of this same 4th July the rain which old Jock, the gardener, had foretold came down in good earnest, wetting to the skin a wayfarer who, in the fading light, was making his way down the Stake Pass towards Borrowdale. From the way in which he walked it was evident that he knew the country, nor did he greatly care for the bad weather, but strode on at a brisk pace, a solitary figure in the grey landscape. He had journeyed far that day and was footsore and tired, so that a sigh of relief escaped him as he came down into the valley, tramped through the little sleeping village of Rosthwaite, where folks went early to bed, and made his way through Borrowdale to the margin of Derwentwater. Here he paused and looked across to St. Herbert's Isle, his eye being attracted by the light burning in Michael's room.

'So Sir Wilfrid is apparently at his summer house! Worse luck to the old Protestant! Unless he is safely at Isel we shall have him playing the spy. Well, at any rate there is a light on Lord's Island, too, so the good folks there have not gone to roost. The question is, How am I to reach them without disturbing the servants?'

Musing over his plans, he strode on through the woods which fringed the shore, pausing now and then to glance at some remembered landmark, and finally stealing down towards Stable Hills Farm, close to which was one of the Radcliffe boathouses.

‘No dogs about; that is well,’ he muttered to himself as he unlatched the door, and soon with deft hands he had loosed a boat and was rowing across the narrow strip of water which lay between the shore and the chief landing-stage on the island. It was now quite dusk, and having safely moored his boat, he crept noiselessly round the ruined chapel until he reached the window of the room in which he had seen a light burning as he stood near Lowdore. The shutters were still unclosed; he glanced into the deserted hall, and saw that the remains of supper were still upon the table.

‘They must have gone to the study,’ he reflected. ‘I’ll not risk going round by the garden and the kitchen premises; better creep round the chapel and the brew-house; one is likely to fall foul of the servants.’

Swiftly crossing the open courtyard in front of the mansion, he made his way to the window of the study, and here good fortune attended him, for the window was open, and beside it, drinking in the cool night air, sat Father Noel, a self-controlled person with iron nerves, who was not in the least likely to be startled by his sudden appearance.

‘Any shelter, good Father, for a hunted stag?’ he asked in a low but cheery voice.

Father Noel involuntarily crossed himself and turned a shade paler; then, with a warning gesture to the fugitive, he turned to prepare old Sir Nicholas, who dozed in his armchair.

‘My child,’ he said as Audrey glanced up at him with startled eyes, ‘your great-uncle Mr. John Radcliffe stands without asking for shelter. We must ask your grandfather what is to be done.’

Audrey threw down her knitting and knelt beside the old man’s chair, gently rousing him.

‘Grandfather,’ she said quietly, ‘there is a great sur-

prise for you. My uncle Radcliffe has come. He needs shelter.'

'John!' said the old man, waking all in a tremble; 'John here and needing shelter?'

'Ay,' said a voice behind them, and glancing round, they saw the heir to the estate swing himself lightly in by the open window with the ease and agility of a much younger man.

'I am here, good friends, but have only escaped the Tower by the skin of my teeth. How are you, brother?' He greeted the old knight with light-hearted good-nature, speaking as though they had but parted a few days ago. 'My pretty niece, you will scarce remember me; but an you love me, go close the window and the shutters; then I shall breathe more freely. We must keep my coming dark, Father Noel, or I shall maybe land you all in trouble.'

'What has happened?' said the old priest anxiously. 'We have heard naught up here, save that the French fleet is in the Channel. Is that true?'

'Ay, indeed it is, and by this time, like enough, it may have beaten the English fleet, for my Lord Torrington hath one of those timid natures that shrink from responsibility of any sort. The Queen and the council, threatened by a French invasion and by a Jacobite insurrection, grew desperate. Then, unluckily, that poor young fellow Crone could hold out no longer.'

'They say he had a fair enough trial,' said old Sir Nicholas. 'We must at least allow that the present government do not treat enemies after the fashion of former times, when my Lord Jeffreys condemned men. But what of young Crone? Is he dead?'

'No, poor beggar, at last he broke down and couldn't face the scaffold. They offered him a free pardon if only he would confess all he knew, and so at Whitehall he revealed many matters which showed the Queen the

strength of the Jacobite cause. My Lord Clarendon is in the Tower, and I should be keeping him company had I not, by the aid of my worthy friend Father Sharp, contrived to escape before the warrant had been delivered. What do you say? Can I shelter for a time in the priests' hole?'

'Yes, you would be safe enough there,' said Sir Nicholas, 'as Audrey remembers, from her game of hide and seek, 'tis little likely to be found. We had old Father Francis there for weeks.'

'What is the matter, my child?' said Father Noel, his keen eyes at once observing the look of doubt and trouble that flashed into Audrey's face.

'Could it be possible,' she said, 'that Henry already knows my uncle to be a fugitive?'

'Why, doubtless the authorities at Keswick know it,' said John Radcliffe easily. 'I have been some time getting here, and ill news, as we all know, flies apace. You mean that this Under-Sheriff lover of yours will come searching the house?'

'He was here this morning,' said Audrey, colouring crimson, 'and I remember that he asked if we had any visitors, and spoke of having to be much in Keswick during the next few weeks, and that he hoped often to come and see me.'

Her eyes filled with tears, for a terrible doubt of Henry's motive for the first time came into her mind. Was he just professing special tenderness to her to further his own ends? Did he mean to use her as his tool? Use her against her own kith and kin?

The thought tortured her, nor was there any comfort in the long-embarrassed silence which reigned in the room. It was quite evident that even gentle old Sir Nicholas, with all his reluctance to think evil of his neighbours, believed that her lover had been seeking for information that morning as to the escaped Jacobite.

Now, Audrey, though gentle and sweet by nature, was quite capable of being roused by anything which savoured of meanness, and the notion of being trapped into betraying those who were of her own blood made her heart stir indignantly.

‘Oh,’ she cried, ‘I don’t think you will be safe here! I believe Henry will come again with his question as to visitors, and how am I truthfully to answer him if you are in the priests’ hole?—actually in the house?’

‘My child, a lie in such a case would be quite permissible,’ said Father Noel. ‘You would be merely telling such a lie as Michal did to save David from her father’s fury.’

‘I can’t tell a lie to my lover,’ said Audrey.

‘The maid is right,’ said John Radcliffe. ‘Never fear, Audrey; no one has a right to expect that of you. Better give up your old uncle, my dear.’ He stooped and kissed her with the frank kindness of look that had won him so many hearts; and as Audrey felt him pat her gently on the shoulder, as though she had still been a child, her heart went out to this unknown kinsman, and she felt the impossibility of betraying him.

‘I could never give you up, uncle,’ she said warmly. ‘Only if we could contrive to shelter you elsewhere, I think Henry’s suspicions would be more easy to allay. Even if I tried to lie, I should do it badly, and he would at once guess that something was amiss.’

‘There is something in that,’ said Father Noel. ‘A lover of truth for its own sake ever bungles the matter and lies shamefacedly. Ha! there’s knocking at the great door. I fear your coming to the island has been observed.’

For a moment they all seemed stupefied, for a visitor at that late hour was unheard of, and to bestow John Radcliffe in the priests’ hole was now out of the question. Audrey was the most quick-witted, and with a

woman's swift intuition saw in a flash the sole chance of escape.

'Quick, uncle,' she said, 'come with me to my room and I will bolt the door. Henry would never dream of disturbing me.'

'You are willing to take the risk?' said John Radcliffe, hesitating for a moment.

But she caught his arm impatiently and drew him to the door. 'Quick, quick! or we shall not reach the stairs before the servants come,' she urged; and John Radcliffe, without another word, obeyed, following her swiftly up the broad, shallow steps, along a gallery, and into a room dimly visible by a rushlight which burnt on the table near the bed. She closed and bolted the door behind them, then breathlessly motioned him towards the large, roomy cupboard where her dresses hung.

'I will let you out when they tell us that all is safe below,' she said, locking the door upon him, and then pausing for a minute to listen intently to what was passing.

She heard steps in the entrance hall, then the voice of old Duncan, the butler.

'Sir Nicholas is alone, sir,' he said. 'If any visitor had come into the house to-day, why, I should have known it.'

'Well, let me speak a few words with Sir Nicholas,' replied a clear, penetrating voice, and Audrey shivered, for she knew that it was, as they had feared, Henry himself.

She stole across the room to the bed, and creeping into it with her clothes on, drew up the heavy, knitted coverlet, shuddering as though it had been a cold winter's night instead of a sultry evening in July.

It seemed to her that without a moment's warning she had been plunged into a sea of difficulties and perils,

and her heart ached as she thought how soon the brightness of the morning had passed away. But though plainly seeing that she had a difficult part to play, there was no wavering about her. In an instant she had thrown in her lot with those of her own blood. It was nothing to her that she shared neither their religious nor their political views; on such details she never even bestowed a thought in this crisis. She only knew that her lover was seeking her uncle's life and liberty, and all her sympathies went to the man who had begged for help and shelter. For to fly to the rescue of the oppressed is the natural instinct of every true woman, the secret of that motherliness which enters into every relation of life, perfecting her attitude not only towards children, but towards husband, kinsman, and friend.

Meanwhile Henry Brownrigg had entered the study, looking sharply round with expectant eyes and feeling somewhat nonplussed by the calm of the atmosphere. Sir Nicholas leant back in his armchair, with his eyes shielded by one of his long, slender hands, and as the visitor was announced he rose with an air of mild surprise and gave him a quiet, courtly greeting. Beside the window sat Father Noel, book in hand.

'You'll excuse my rising, Mr. Brownrigg; but, as very likely you have heard, I have crippled my knee,' he said pleasantly. 'I trust nothing is wrong with Mrs. Brownrigg?'

'I do not come from Millbeck, but from Keswick,' said Henry Brownrigg. 'A very disagreeable errand has been entrusted to me, Sir Nicholas, and I only wish I were not called by my duty to carry it out. The fact is a warrant is out for the arrest of your brother, Mr. John Radcliffe.'

Father Noel made a startled ejaculation.

'Upon what charge, sir?' he inquired.

‘On a charge of high treason,’ said Henry Brownrigg, trying in vain to read the priest’s face.

‘Foolish fellow!’ said Father Noel. ‘He is one of those who cannot keep from dabbling in politics. ’Tis a pity he has not followed the example of his brother and held aloof altogether from public affairs; but he has been much abroad, and that is an ill training for an Englishman: they lose all genuine patriotism if they are much in France.’

‘There is truth in that,’ said Sir Nicholas. ‘But I think, Mr. Brownrigg, you know me well enough to be aware that I have no sympathy with any of the hare-brained schemes for calling the French to invade our shores in the hope of restoring King James. Rather than see a French invasion I would welcome again the days of Cromwell and the Commonwealth.’

‘Sir, I am quite well aware that you are a true-hearted English gentleman,’ said Henry Brownrigg, touched in spite of himself by the unmistakable sincerity of the old man’s tone. ‘But to-night we have had terrible news; the English fleet has been disgracefully beaten by the French off Beachy Head, and my Lord Torrington has been forced to fly along the coast of Kent and to take refuge in the Thames.’

‘Great Heavens!’ said Sir Nicholas, his eyes kindling. ‘This is terrible news, indeed! Mr. Brownrigg, on many matters we disagree, but I call God to witness that in this matter of the French invasion we are entirely of the same mind.’

He held out his hand, and Henry Brownrigg pressed it in his, not without genuine admiration of the old Catholic gentleman, whose patriotism was plainly visible.

‘It seems ungracious,’ he said, ‘to return to the object of my visit, but duty must be done. It will be my duty to arrest your brother, however little I like the task, and

it seems only too likely that, having, as we know, fled from London, he should take refuge here.'

'He would be very slow to imperil Sir Nicholas,' said Father Noel. 'In old days I knew him well, and there is much kindly generosity in his nature. Moreover, to come here would be a foolish and risky thing to do, and Mr. John Radcliffe is a shrewd man.'

'I will be open with you,' said Henry Brownrigg, 'and will tell you just how things stand. We know that some days ago Mr. John Radcliffe left London, and came down to York by coach. At York he disappeared; and in spite of many efforts we have not yet traced him. This evening, however, I chanced to observe a boat crossing at an unusually late hour to the island, and on inquiry learnt from a travelling pedlar who was passing with his pack-horse that he had seen a gentleman in the path between Rosthwaite and Grange. Now, it is of course quite possible that I may be mistaken, but taken in connection with the boat which I myself noticed——'

'That, if you will pardon the interruption, is a matter of frequent occurrence,' said the priest; 'on these long summer evenings the servants often cross from the farm late in the evening.'

'Still I conceive it my duty,' said Henry Brownrigg haughtily, 'to make a search of the house, though I am sorry to put you to any inconvenience, Sir Nicholas.'

'Not in the least,' said the old knight with a courtly bow; 'you are perfectly at liberty, sir, to make whatever search you deem necessary.'

The Under-Sheriff was puzzled by this ready acquiescence.

'They will show me round the place,' he reflected, 'but all the while they may have got the fellow stowed away in some secret room.'

'It is hardly to be imagined, Sir Nicholas,' he said,

‘that an old mansion like this was built without its secret hiding-place; it would save us all a world of trouble if you would kindly tell me where your secret room is.’

‘With pleasure,’ said the old knight. ‘It is known to few; but old Duncan will open it for you if I give him instructions.’

Then summoning the old butler, he said:

‘Take Mr. Brownrigg round the house; he is in search of a gentleman against whom a warrant has been issued. Show him through the rooms and let him look into the priests’ hole. But go quietly, Duncan, for I do not wish Mistress Audrey to be disturbed; by this time she will be asleep.’

‘Oh, we will go quietly, I assure you,’ said Henry Brownrigg. ‘I would not for the world alarm Audrey: she has looked sadly out of health since her mother’s death, and we must not let her be harassed by this affair. Pray say nothing to her about my visit.’

‘You are quite right,’ said Sir Nicholas; ‘she must not be disturbed or in any way troubled.’

So the Under-Sheriff was solemnly conducted round the house, and looked into every hole and cranny with the one exception of Audrey’s room; but, needless to say, he discovered no trace of the Jacobite, and before long was rowing back to Keswick greatly crestfallen and disappointed.

In the meanwhile Sir Nicholas and the priest had been holding a consultation and had come to the conclusion that it was necessary to take the old butler into their confidence. When he returned from bolting the great door upon the Under-Sheriff they had him into the study and told him the whole truth, making him swear perfect secrecy.

‘Now go and bid Mistress Audrey bring her uncle down once more, and bring some supper in here, for I

doubt Mr. Radcliffe will be hungry after his journey,' said Sir Nicholas.

Duncan bustled off in great excitement, eager to see with his own eyes this visitor whose presence he had strenuously and honestly denied to the Under-Sheriff.

'Mistress Audrey,' he whispered, knocking softly on her door, 'I was to tell you that all was safe below.'

Audrey hastened across the room, and holding the rushlight in her hand, peered cautiously into the dark passage.

'Is Mr. Brownrigg gone?' she asked.

'Ay, miss, he has searched the house and has gone, and I was to bid you and Mr. Radcliffe come down once more to the study.'

Audrey, with a sigh of relief, unlocked the cupboard.

''Tis all safe, uncle,' she whispered.

And John Radcliffe, who had stretched himself out comfortably enough in the roomy dress-cupboard, sprang to his feet and gave the old butler a careless, kindly greeting.

''Tis many a year since I met you, Duncan,' he said, 'but, by the Mass! you're not a day older as far as looks go. Come, my pretty niece, you have been the saving of me to-night, and I'm much mistaken if you haven't sharper brains even than Father Noel, which is saying a good deal. By all means let us come down and have a family conclave.'

Audrey, who was most eager to know all that her lover had said, was glad enough to make one of the little group which gathered round the table in the study while John Radcliffe made a hearty meal.

With a sinking heart she heard of the disaster at Beachy Head and the threatened French invasion, yet it was a comfort to know that her grandfather by no means shared his brother's views with regard to these

matters, and she listened with a thrill of loving pride to his straightforward words.

‘You know well enough, John, that I hate all your plottings and contrivings and will take no part in them. But blood is thicker than water, and I will do my utmost to shelter you. What are your plans?’

‘If I can take shelter here for a while until we see which way events run,’ said John Radcliffe, ‘that is all I desire. If King James prospers in Ireland and the French invasion is successful in the south of England, why, I should return before long to London. If not, I should make my way to the coast and take ship for France. In any case a few weeks must decide the fate of the kingdom and my fate with it.’

‘Uncle, you will not be safe in this house,’ said Audrey quickly.

‘What! not even in the priests’ hole?’

‘The Under-Sheriff knows the secret of that since to-night,’ said Father Noel.

‘And he will be constantly coming here to see me,’ said Audrey, blushing. ‘I cannot parry his questions if you are in the house.’

John Radcliffe gave a low whistle of dismay.

‘Then what is to be done?’ he said composedly, helping himself a second time to the pigeon pie. ‘I thought now he had once searched the house, all would be well.’

‘There are many other hiding-places among the hills if you don’t mind being in the open air,’ she suggested. ‘Michael and I used to know of several when we were children. I could take you myself this very night, and no one else knows of them.’

‘But, my dear child, if you were seen wandering about the fells the truth would at once be guessed,’ said Sir Nicholas.

‘There are few people astir in Borrowdale,’ said Father Noel. ‘She would be safe enough, and Henry

Brownrigg is disposed of, at any rate, for to-night. I have just seen his boat disappear in the distance.'

'How are we to tell that she may not happen upon some shepherd? The less we desire to meet folk the more certain we are to do it, as a rule.'

'Grandfather,' said Audrey, 'I have thought of all that while waiting upstairs. It would never do to go in my own dress; but you remember how all the Borrowdale folk say that the bogle still haunts the neighbourhood and has by many of them been seen, dressed in the clothes he wore when he fought the duel with the Parliamentary officer from St. Herbert's Isle. Now, upstairs we still have some of the clothes my father wore when he was a lad of seventeen. In old days I often used to help my mother to unfold them, and see that they were free from moth.'

'And you would make your uncle wear these?' asked Sir Nicholas.

'No, I would wear them myself,' said Audrey, blushing a little. 'Then, did any chance to catch sight of us, they would at once run away, for there is nothing so much dreaded as the sight of the Borrowdale Bogle.'

John Radcliffe laughed and rubbed his hands.

'Bravo! little niece! did I not say you had the best wits of us all? You shall enact the ghost of the Royalist Radcliffe, and I for the nonce will be one of old Noll's crew.'

'Child,' said Sir Nicholas, putting his wrinkled hand on hers, 'do not rush into this escapade without thinking. You are right to try to help your uncle, but remember that 'tis a perilous part you are about to play; one, moreover, which might be gravely misunderstood by Mr. Brownrigg should he ever by ill-chance come to hear of it.'

'I know,' said Audrey, 'but oh, sir, anything is better than that Uncle Radcliffe should fall into Henry's

hands. I cannot bear to think that Henry should be the one to bring him to the gallows—anything is better than that!’

Her eyes filled with tears, for it is hard to have to put into words the very fear with which the heart has been fighting. Moreover, there surged over her once more that horrible feeling that Henry had used her that morning as his tool, that even his devotion had been tinged with that other motive.

She was recalled to the present by finding the entire breast of a fat capon thrust onto her empty plate.

‘Eat, my pretty niece, eat,’ said John Radcliffe. ‘If you mean to pilot me across the fells to-night you will stand in need of a good supper. After all, you are flesh and blood, you know, and but a mock ghost.’

She laughed, and did her best to obey, glancing now and then with something of curiosity at this unknown kinsman, who in the course of half an hour had succeeded in making himself so entirely one of the family.

Not only in face was he curiously like his elder brother, but the tone of his voice kept reminding her of some other voice which she knew, and she puzzled her brain to think which of the many Radcliffe cousins it could be. Though like Sir Nicholas in feature, he was twenty years younger, and his light periwig, alert, brisk manner, and upright carriage made him look less than his true age. There was, moreover, about him a buoyancy and youthfulness which astonished Audrey, and she began to understand that, whereas her grandfather hated the very notion of a plot and would not have stirred a finger to restore King James, Uncle Radcliffe revelled in anything likely to bring him excitement and stirring adventure, enjoying the Jacobite conspiracy as a boy enjoys a risky game.

‘Uncle,’ she said, ‘how long can you bear to shelter

among the hills? I must go and arrange with Duncan to get your provisions for the next few days.'

'Oh, if you'll not starve me I'll bide my time patiently enough. And in a few days' time there is bound to be news of one sort or the other.'

'Very well, I will get you plenty of food; and look for me between ten and twelve at night on Wednesday, the 9th; then I can bring you fresh supplies and whatever news we have heard.'

She went away to make her preparations, and as the door closed gently behind her a silence fell on the little group gathered round the table.

CHAPTER XXII

AUDREY'S footsteps had scarcely died away in the distance, however, when old Sir Nicholas started to his feet.

'I must talk once more with her as to this notion,' he muttered to himself, slowly making his way from the room.

John Radcliffe looked after him uneasily.

'My brother likes it ill enough,' he said. 'Yet the maid is in the right; it is by far the best plan.'

'It is undoubtedly the best plan for you,' said Father Noel with a certain dry emphasis on the pronoun which did not escape John Radcliffe.

'Also for you, my friend, and for my brother—all good Catholics are likely to fare ill if they are found sheltering a conspirator.'

'Sir Nicholas does not trouble his head with that thought,' said Father Noel. 'It is, as you rightly divine, the best plan for you, but not the best plan or the safest for Mistress Audrey.'

'Well, what would you have, Father?' said John Radcliffe, smiling. 'Does not holy writ declare that the woman was to be a helpmeet for the man? When a woman offers her help freely, shall I refuse it?'

'There is no fear that you will ever do that, sir,' said Father Noel dryly.

'You were ever hard on my little peccadilloes, Father. Yet you must admit that I proved a good husband to an invalid wife.'

‘I say nothing against your second marriage, but you were greatly to blame as to the first, and, depend upon it, sir, you will yet be called to account for your crime.’

‘Come, Father, crime is a hard word,’ said John Radcliffe, refilling his tankard. ‘Let us call it a mistake, an error of judgment. And remember that I christened the imp before leaving him. That ought to be reckoned to me.’

‘Sir,’ said the honest old priest, his face aflame. ‘It was a piece of the most damned impudence I ever heard of! Don’t boast of it to me. The sacrament was valid, you say? Of course it was! But how you, with the most cold-blooded murder in your mind, dared to take such words on your lips passes my comprehension. I tell you frankly that I believe your child by the second marriage was drowned as a punishment for your blasphemy.’

‘I am quite aware that you account me a scoundrel, Father,’ said John Radcliffe with a good-humoured smile. ‘But I think you might remember that I am not, after all, a murderer, and that the child has grown and prospered; that, in fact, he is at present far better off than I am. To-night, for instance, he will be lapped in luxury, while I, for trying to aid my lawful sovereign, am bound to wander like an outcast on the mountains.’

‘I shall have nothing but hard words for you until you repent and make amends,’ said the priest. ‘I gave you every possible help by sending Michael to you in London. But you let all those months pass and never acknowledged him; nay, you deliberately baffled his efforts to discover the truth.’

‘He was useless for the cause,’ said John Radcliffe. ‘When he is likely to be useful I will acknowledge him, but not before.’

Father Noel’s brow grew dark with anger.

‘I used to think the Under-Sheriff the most selfish

man living, but i' faith I think you surpass him, sir,' he exclaimed wrathfully.

'My dear old friend,' said John Radcliffe with a laugh, 'I do but go the way of all flesh. Here in these rural solitudes you, no doubt, have hearts, bowels of compassion, and all the rest of the paraphernalia of virtue, but such things shrivelled up in me many years ago. I care only for what will serve my turn. However, I think as a priest you should allow that my merit in trying to convert Michael Derwent to the true church ought to count.'

'Your efforts to convert him failed,' said the priest gravely. 'And I think they deserved to fail. I have been your friend, John Radcliffe, for many years, and you'll never get flattery or false comfort from me. That was a true word of the psalmist when he wrote, "Evil shall hunt the wicked person to overthrow him."'

'It may be a true word, but it's a damned uncomfortable one to quote to a fellow when there's a warrant out against him and he has to pass the night in the open,' said John Radcliffe with his air of imperturbable good-humour. 'Come, a truce to this talk, and tell me a little more of my pretty niece. Is she really in love with this Under-Sheriff?'

'Unluckily she is!' said Father Noel, sighing. 'I doubt it's proving a happy marriage, but she honestly cares for the fellow. And I think he cares for her as much as his nature admits of. A cold-blooded fish of a fellow he is; absorbed in himself and his own aggrandisement.'

'Yet a degree less heartless than I am,' said John Radcliffe with a twinkle in his bright eyes. 'Ah! in good time. Here comes old Duncan with half the contents of the larder. This is much better fare than what Father Noel has been forcing me to swallow,—you understand me thoroughly, Duncan. A brace of ducks,

excellent ! a flagon of Hollands—my good old friend, why not keep to couples still as they did in the ark?—make it two flagons, Duncan; they'll be easier to carry. Bread enough to stock a stall in Keswick market place. Good! My exile will be endurable.'

The old butler went off chuckling to himself in search of the second bottle of Hollands, and in another minute Sir Nicholas returned to the room so that no more could be said with regard to Michael Derwent.

Meanwhile Audrey had taken out of the old oak chest in her mother's room the clothes which must serve for the ghost. The doublet and vest she at once saw to be hopeless, for they were long, and cut after the fashion wore in the first year of the Restoration. Moreover, in this summer weather they would prove most cumbersome and hot for a long walk. She chose instead the white frilled shirt; the short grey cloak, with its ample folds, lined with sky-blue taffeta; the knee breeches and stockings, also of grey, and the broad grey felt hat, with pale-blue feathers curling over the brim. All that remained to be done was to loosen the fillet which bound her hair, and to let her sunny curls hang quite loosely about her shoulders; and when this was done she could not resist laughing at her own reflection in the glass, so exactly did she resemble the young cavalier whose picture hung in the hall below.

All fear had now left her, and her eyes were bright with the fun of this masquerade as she went downstairs to the study. Even old Sir Nicholas forgot his fears and scruples as he looked into the innocent face of the girl, who, without a thought of herself, so readily aided the unknown kinsman, though little approving of his views.

John Radcliffe, about to make some jesting compliment as to the excellent fashion in which the cavalier costume became her, hesitated and finally left the words unuttered. For there was an unconsciousness about

Audrey which somehow impressed him, and he resisted the temptation to see what she would look like when she blushed.

The clock had struck one when at length all things were ready, and old Duncan appeared at the door with the provisions stowed away in a small sack, which John Radcliffe swung across his shoulder.

‘Now, for all the world I am like Tinker Bunyan’s Pilgrim faring forth on his travels,’ he exclaimed with a laugh. ‘Come, lead the way, Audrey, for, like Christian, I flee for my life and have turned my back on London, the City of Destruction. All the same, Father Noel, be sure to let me know the latest news from the city, for I hanker to return to it.’

‘I wish I could come with you to-night,’ said the priest, ‘but for this luckless knee of mine I could have been your pilot. Take care of your guide, sir, and don’t forget that she is risking much for you.’

‘Oh, depend upon it, she enjoys nothing better than such an adventure. It breaks the monotony of her life,’ said John Radcliffe, shaking Father Noel by the hand with careless good-nature. Then taking leave of his brother in the cordial, affectionate fashion which always attracted people to him, he followed Audrey out into the hall, down the steps, and across the wet grass which led to the landing-stage. In perfect silence they unmoored the boat. Audrey signing to him to take the oars took her place in the stern, and they made for the boat-house near Stable Hills Farm.

It was now quite dark, save for the stars, and Audrey was glad when they had made their way safely across the field near the boathouse and had lit upon the mule track which led through the woods from Keswick to Grange and Rosthwaite. When once this was gained all was easy enough, and they walked on briskly beneath the trees, talking in low voices as they went.

‘There is a light on St. Herbert’s Isle still,’ said John Radcliffe, pausing for a minute on the little plank bridge which had been thrown across the beck flowing down between Walla and Falcon crags. ‘Is Sir Wilfrid Lawson there?’

‘No,’ replied Audrey, ‘but some of the children and Mr. Derwent, the secretary. It is most likely his light that we see, for he is a great reader and often studies late at night.’

‘A pleasant fellow. I met him in London,’ said John Radcliffe, ‘though he knew me only under my assumed name of Calverley.’

‘He is one of my best friends. We were always together as children,’ said Audrey as they walked on, ‘but of late somehow I have seen but little of him. For one thing, Mr. Brownrigg never greatly likes him. They had a quarrel as boys. Henry always believes him to be base-born, and though it is practically proved that his mother was the daughter of old Mr. Carleton, near Penrith, and was wedded in London to some stranger, Michael can’t get a copy of the certificate, for it has been tampered with.’

‘Poor fellow!’ said John Radcliffe, ‘that is hard luck on him. Are you sure that is Mr. Brownrigg’s reason for holding aloof from him?’

‘What other reason could there be?’ said Audrey, puzzled by his tone.

‘Well, I had a notion, possibly quite a wrong one, that they were rivals,’ said John Radcliffe; ‘that in fact, my pretty niece, Sir Wilfrid’s penniless secretary had the audacity to love you, and that Mr. Brownrigg objected to him on that score.’

Audrey started, and was glad that the darkness hid her burning face. ‘I never thought of that,’ she faltered, a dreadful conviction taking possession of her that her uncle’s surmise was true.

‘Well, I am bound to own that Father Noel hinted at something of the sort in the letter he wrote to me about young Derwent. And I had not talked long with the lad when we first met at Whitehall without feeling convinced that the worthy father was right.’

‘I never thought of him but as my friend and foster-brother,’ said Audrey with a sound of tears in her voice.

‘Well, well, there’s no blame to you, my dear,’ said John Radcliffe; ‘a maiden in your position is bound to have many servants all craving for her hand. Is that Barrow Gill that we hear tumbling over the rocks?’

‘Yes,’ said Audrey, recalled to the present. ‘We must leave the shore now and climb the fells towards Ashness Farm. There is a track here to the left which the Watendlath people ride down on their way to Keswick Market.’

Leaving the shelter of the trees, they now began to ascend the rough track. The cool night air was delicious, and John Radcliffe seemed to forget all the perils that beset him in sheer enjoyment of the present.

‘It makes me feel like a boy again,’ he said. ‘After all, though these damned Dutch folk cause me to be hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, they furnish me with unknown delights as well. And who knows? In a few days the tide may have turned; King James may enjoy his own again, and we shall then taste the sweets of hunting.’

‘Place-hunting or Protestant-hunting?’ asked Audrey with mirth in her voice.

John Radcliffe laughed.

‘I did not give thee credit for so apt a retort, my pretty niece. But, depend upon it, I shall never forget the good turn the Borrowdale Bogle is doing me to-night; and when the King comes to his own again, why, I will see to it that Henry Brownrigg is not molested, so you are serving your lover by this little escapade.’

‘Hush!’ cried Audrey, gripping his arm in a sudden panic.

‘As I live! a light!’ exclaimed John Radcliffe beneath his breath. ‘It moves too. It must be a lantern.’

They stood perfectly still, watching anxiously to see whether the light drew nearer; then, when there could no longer be a question that it was steadily approaching them, Audrey swiftly drew her uncle out of the track, and moving a little to the right, whispered in his ear:

‘Crouch down at the further side of the thorn-bush by the gill. It must be someone from Ashness Farm.’

John Radcliffe promptly obeyed, while Audrey, gliding to the near side of the bush, stood erect, her eyes fixed on the approaching light, knowing that the only chance of avoiding danger was to strike awe into the heart of whatever shepherd or dalesman it proved to be. She must enact the ghost and still her own fears, though her heart throbbed till she felt half suffocated.

The lantern swung a little as its bearer strode down the hill; he seemed in haste, and Audrey fondly hoped that he might not even observe her, when just as he was passing within twenty yards something made him glance in the direction of the thorn-bush. For a moment he paused, then, to her horror, lifted the lantern till its light fell full upon her. Her eyes dilated with terror, but by a supreme effort she stood absolutely still, and the next instant the terrible tension was relieved, for the shepherd with a loud cry rushed past, and she saw the lantern swaying madly to and fro as he plunged recklessly down the hill, while upon the still night air there floated back gasping ejaculations of:

‘Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
Bless the ground that I tread on.’

When at length all was still once more and the light had disappeared John Radcliffe crept out of his shelter

at the further side of the thorn, and taking her hand, pressed it fast in his.

‘God bless you, little ghost,’ he said. ‘Why, how cold you are, child! It has given you a fright. Come! we must wait no longer, but hasten to shelter lest the good man returns upon his way. It was worth something to see anyone in such a panic,’ and he chuckled softly to himself as he thought of the shepherd’s horrified cry and of the way in which he had scuttled down the hillside. ‘Who was the fellow, do you think? And what can have been his errand at this time of night?’

‘It was Tim Grisedale, the shepherd from Ashness Farm,’ said Audrey, mounting the hill cheerfully again. ‘But what takes him out I do not know. See! there is a light in the farm. Perhaps his wife has been taken ill; she is the daughter of the miller of Lowdore, and Tim may have been going to fetch her mother to her.’

‘In that case,’ said John Radcliffe, laughing, ‘he had better say naught as to his encounter with the ghost, or the good woman will not care to come out.’

‘Oh,’ said Audrey merrily, ‘the shepherd has much more imagination than his mother-in-law; she would only mock at his ghost story and say there were no such things as spirits walking the earth. I used to say so till I saw the ghost of Michael’s mother.’

John Radcliffe rapidly crossed himself.

‘Saw what?’ he asked sharply.

‘The ghost of Michael’s mother at Carleton Manor. I saw her by the gate, and the horses saw her too, and shied and ran away. That was the cause of the coach overturning, and my mother never really recovered from the accident, though she lived many months after it.’

‘My dear child,’ he said in an expostulating voice, ‘is it likely that the dead would come from another world to make a couple of carriage horses overturn a coach?’

‘And yet you know, uncle, holy writ proves that animals are often quicker to see spirits than men are. Besides, I can never for a moment doubt that I saw her myself. It was the very image of the picture at the manor, and of the miniature which Michael and I dug up in Borrowdale. Just that beautiful, innocent, girlish face—but of course you never saw the miniature, did you?’

‘N-no,’ said John Radcliffe, shivering a little. ‘Mr. Derwent would scarcely have shown it to a mere acquaintance. Isn’t there some legend about a “barfoot stag” and a ghostly pack of hounds in this part of the world?’

‘They will not trouble us here,’ said Audrey, ‘but the people at Rosthwaite and Watendlath often hear them. They say the stag plunges into the Derwent, where it flows past the Bowder Stone. I have never heard it, but Agnes Collins of Grange and Anne Fisher used to tell us about it when we were children. Michael never would believe that it was anything but the wind roaring among the crags.’

By this time they had reached the ford where the Watendlath folk crossed Barrow Gill on their way to Keswick Market; and though crossing the stepping stones in the dark was no easy task, Audrey managed it better than she had expected and found that the ghost’s attire lent itself admirably to the rough scrambling over rock and fell and through bush and briar which followed.

At length they gained the place among the woods in which as children she and Michael had so often played. It was a shallow cave hidden away among the brushwood and worn ages ago in the grey rock. To make a bed of heather and ling, to stow away the provisions, and to listen to her uncle’s cheery flow of talk, kept Audrey fully occupied for the next half hour; then satisfied as

to his safety and promising to return on the evening of the fifth day with news and fresh provisions, she took leave of the kinsman who a few hours before had been utterly unknown to her, but to whose charm of manner she had so quickly responded.

To make her way home quite alone in the dark was eerie enough; she breathed more freely when she was out of the wood and had the cheerful ripple of Barrow Gill for company. When she had safely forded the little stream she stood still for a moment, looking down through the gloom to the faint glimmer which just showed where Derwentwater lay in the valley below. She could see, too, the light on Lord's Island, and the light still burned in Michael's room on St. Herbert's Isle.

With a pang her uncle's words returned to her. Could it indeed be true that he had loved her? She walked sorrowfully down the hill, musing over the past, thinking of the journey to Raby Castle and of the days there before Henry arrived, seeing many things in a wholly different light, shuddering to think how all unconsciously she had encouraged him. She had loved him always, but merely as her foster-brother and old playmate, while with him all had been different. Surely, too, he was greatly changed since her betrothal. He looked much older and graver; he eagerly availed himself of every excuse to avoid her, and though now so near a neighbour, invariably put forward some excellent reason for refusing the invitations of Sir Nicholas or Father Noel. She had only met him once since his return from London, and then his manner had been strange and constrained; while his reference to her mother's death had been merely formal and had chilled rather than comforted her. Was this the explanation of it all, and could it be, as her uncle said, that all the time Father Noel had known the truth of things?

And then remembering the loneliness of Michael's position, and the hard fate which had followed him from the very beginning of his life, the tears rushed to her eyes and half blinded her.

The sting of it lay in the perception that it was quite out of her power to do anything for him. If this were indeed true, Henry Brownrigg's jealousy and dislike were explained, and she could not hope even in the most distant future to serve Michael. Brushing the tears from her eyes that she might see her way, she was all at once horrified to find herself confronted by Tim Grisedale and his lantern, while beside him toiled Meg Mounsey, the miller's wife.

'Don't talk to me of the Borrowdale Bogle!' said Meg Mounsey. ''Twas nowt but thy ain foolish fancy.'

'I say it *were* the bogle,' said Tim doggedly, 'and look you! there it goes glidin' awa' over the fell.'

He stopped dead, and with trembling hands raised the lantern so that its rays fell upon the tall ghostly figure with its light plumes and antique cavalier dress.

Meg Mounsey, the stubborn disbeliever in ghosts, fell on her knees.

'Gude preserve us!' she cried, quaking with terror. ''Twas the truth you told, Tim. And sair a doubt but it bodes ill to my poor lass at the farm.'

'See where it stalks down yonder,' said Tim, staring with dilated eyes at the ghost as it glided away and finally disappeared among the trees at the foot of the hill. 'Thank heaven, 'tis gone!' he gasped. 'Now hasten, guid mother, lest it coom back!'

And Meg Mounsey, nothing loth, rose from her knees and breathlessly climbed the fell, now and then glancing back in an awestruck way to see that the bogle was not pursuing them.

CHAPTER XXIII

ON the following morning the little town of Keswick was, as usual, crowded with country-folk coming in to dispose of their goods in the Market Square and to buy necessaries for the coming week.

Zinogle, the fiddler, loved market day, for he was a sociable being and took great pleasure in chatting with the dales-folk and telling them the latest news. It was therefore only natural that, as he leant against the doorway of the old wooden building in the centre of the square which was dignified by the name of the Town Hall, he should be one of the first to listen to Tim Grisedale's story of the Borrowdale Bogle.

Now, it chanced that the Under-Sheriff was standing just inside the door, listening to the long-winded tale of the constable in whose charge a certain prisoner in the lock-up had proved refractory. Henry Brownrigg found the tale of the Borrowdale Bogle the more interesting of the two, and dismissing the constable with orders to punish the refractory prisoner and to have him removed with all speed to Cockermouth gaol, he stood listening carefully to what passed between the shepherd and the fiddler.

'This looks strange,' he muttered to himself. 'It was last night I saw the boat go across to Lord's Island and searched the house. Is it possible that this ghost can be the man we are in search of?'

'Look here, my good fellow,' he exclaimed, suddenly emerging from the doorway to Tim's con-

sternation, 'at what time did you see this Borrowdale Bogle?'

'Aw, zur, it were after midnight; mappen aboot two o'clock or mappen a bit earlier, the first time,' said the shepherd.

'You saw it twice, then? Whereabouts?'

'First by Barrow Gill, far up the fell, and again with Meg Mounsey as I coom back, and then it were lower doon the hill, stalkin' awa' over towards Falcon Crag, but bearin' doon to the shore until I lost sight of it in the trees.'

'You are sure it was no idle fancy? You shepherd-folk are apt to see visions.'

'Zur, mappen that be true, but Meg Mounsey she be solid and slow in the head-piece, and she saw it and droppit on her knees, a-callin' herself a miserable sinner, for, but a wee while afore, she had sworn there was no sech things as bogles.'

Zinogle chuckled.

'Meg Mounsey is evidence; no one can gainsay that,' he said. 'A stuck pig has more imagination. If Meg Mounsey saw a bogle, why, sir, the bogle must have been there.'

'Dressed like a cavalier, you say, with light plumes in its hat and a short cloak? 'Tis a strange story! I have a mind to look into this matter. If I remember right, there is some idle tale in the country-side about one of the Radcliffes that was killed in the civil war and has ever since walked. We will set a few folk to look for this disturber of the peace, and if you see it again, Tim, let me know with all speed. Zinogle, if I mistake not, yonder comes your godson, the foundling; have the goodness to ask him to step across here and speak to me.'

Zinogle, inwardly raging at the Under-Sheriff's rudeness, slowly approached Michael.

‘Our cock-a-hoop Under-Sheriff desires speech with ye,’ he said, ‘and, for the love of God, do take him down a peg or two; speak to him in the latest fangled London fashion.’

Michael laughed at the old fiddler’s comical expression, and in truth there was a new dignity in his manner born of self-restraint, and a certain nameless ease of bearing gained by mixing more with his fellowmen. Henry greeted him in his usual patronising tone, but instinctively felt that he no longer had the power to gall his old schoolfellow.

‘There is a strange story afoot to-day about the Borrowdale Bogle,’ he said when the salutations were over. ‘Have you ever heard of it? As a native of Borrowdale, you ought to know the truth of such things.’

‘Oh,’ said Michael with a laugh, ‘I have heard that old wife’s tale many a time, but I never put any faith in it.’

‘What form is it supposed to take?’

‘Why, the form of the young kinsman of old Sir Edward Radcliffe, who garrisoned Lord’s Island in the civil war. ’Tis true enough, I believe, that he was killed in a duel on the shores of Derwentwater somewhere between Lord’s Island and Lowdore, and of course the dales-folk say that he walks.’

‘You never by any chance saw him?’ said Henry Brownrigg with a searching look.

‘Never,’ said Michael, ‘nor do I expect ever to see him.’

‘Yet here is Tim Grisedale ready to take his Bible oath that both he and Meg Mounsey of Lowdore saw the ghost last night, or rather before dawn this morning.’

‘Meg Mounsey!’ cried Michael, bursting into a hearty boyish laugh. ‘Well, that passes all belief! If Meg Mounsey takes to ghost-seeing I shall have to believe in them, for a more matter-of-fact body doesn’t exist.’

Surely 'twas something of a solid and corporeal nature that she saw, a white horse maybe, or a stray cow.'

'Well, they described the ghost as in cavalier dress with light plumes in his hat,' said the Under-Sheriff. 'Tis a very odd tale. If Audrey had seen it I should not have been surprised, for she is out of health and broods too much over her mother's death; moreover, she has imagination, and, as you will remember, fancied she saw a vision at Carleton Manor last year.'

'Yes,' said Michael gravely, 'I could never understand that story; it was one of the things which no one can explain. Perhaps, after all, in certain states of mind and body the spirit world can make itself visible to us. I have no belief in this silly tale of the Borrowdale Bogle, yet I confess to a sneaking belief in such a purposeful return as that of the ghost in *Hamlet*. This is bad news as to the defeat off Beachy Head. I had heard nothing of it till this morning. How distracted the poor Queen will be! Is there no news from Ireland?'

'None as yet,' said Henry Brownrigg gloomily. 'Things look black indeed for the future. Did you hear anything before you left London of the Jacobite plottings?'

'Oh! there was of course much talk about them,' said Michael with a momentary hesitation which did not escape the keen and observant Under-Sheriff.

'But naturally you did not hear anything but rumours. You did not happen to become acquainted with any of these plotters?'

Now, Michael had a very shrewd suspicion that Mr. Calverley was embroiled in the Jacobite plot, but he was not minded to say so to Henry Brownrigg.

'I had little time for making acquaintance of any sort,' he replied evasively. 'A private secretary has to be at the beck and call of his master. And though Sir Wilfrid Lawson is, as you know, the most considerate

of men, this legal business of his gave one plenty to do.'

With that he raised his hat and bade the Under-Sheriff good day, leaving him in some perplexity.

'I would give much to know whether that fellow is in league with the priest on Lord's Island,' he reflected. 'There was no getting anything out of him to-day; yet I am much inclined to fancy that he knows something of Mr. John Radcliffe, alias Mr. James Calverley. I shall go in for a little ghost-stalking for the next week or two, and see if I can't get hold of our fugitive. Mounsey, the miller, will make a good patrol, and I'll bring over Matt Birkett from Millbeck; he is a wary fellow and has the eyes of a hawk. If we can only get hold of John Radcliffe, it will suit my game admirably, and should it chance that Michael Derwent is mixed up in the affair, why, all the better, for I hate the fellow and owe him a grudge.'

Audrey paid the penalty of her escapade by being prostrated the next day by a violent attack of nervous headache, called in those days an attack of the megrim, and was still too poorly on the Sunday to go as usual to the Church of St. Kentigern at Crosthwaite. Perhaps she was not sorry to remain at home, for it deferred her meeting with Henry, and somehow she dreaded this, fearing that he might ask some unanswerable question, or that she might by some hesitation of manner betray the secret that had been entrusted to her.

Fortunately for her, the Under-Sheriff happened to be unusually busy, and it was not until the afternoon of Tuesday that he was able to visit Lord's Island again. Audrey was sitting in the orchard in one of her favourite nooks under the apple trees that grew near the water's edge on the south end of the island. She came swiftly forward to greet her lover, forgetting for a moment all that had happened in the pleasure of his ap-

proach. What were Jacobite plots, or religious differences, or fugitive great-uncles when love was in question?

For a time her tender womanliness called out all that was best in Henry Brownrigg; he forgot his schemes, and his sordid, hard-hearted plans for the future; just for a little while he became what she dreamt him to be—single-hearted, generous, and devoted.

‘I was sorry,’ he said, ‘to have to search the house the other night. I hope, dear heart, you did not take it amiss.’

‘Why, no,’ said Audrey. ‘You had to do your duty, and I know you bear no ill will to my grandfather.’

‘Indeed I do not,’ he said. ‘Everyone respects Sir Nicholas. But his brother is a very different man, a dangerous plotter, a hard-hearted bigot, one that would relentlessly persecute all who were not of his faith, should his party ever return to power.’

‘But surely it never can return,’ said Audrey eagerly.

‘Indeed, there is grievous fear that it may,’ said the Under-Sheriff, and he spoke truly enough, for never had England been in such jeopardy as during those summer days. ‘Here is the English fleet disgracefully beaten, and the French fleet, in unopposed possession of the Channel, likely to swoop down at any time and harry our coast. And there is this accursed Jacobite plot, showing grievous dissensions in the country, and, worst of all, an express has just arrived with news that King William has been wounded in Ireland on the banks of the Boyne.’

Audrey’s eyes filled with tears; it was not only that the desperate condition of the country troubled her, but that the miserable position she found herself in seemed all at once to grow intolerable. Was she, whose sympathies were all with King William and Queen Mary, and the cause they had come to defend, to be called

upon to tramp over the fells, bearing to the fugitive the news he would gloat over of the King's wound?

'Don't fret over the disaster,' said Henry Brownrigg, putting his arm round her. 'A wound in the shoulder from a ball is a dangerous thing, and the King's constitution is sickly, yet we may at least hope that his life will be spared. And should the worst happen that King James and his tyranny be brought back to this land, why, I think Sir Nicholas Radcliffe will do his utmost to prevent any evil coming on his granddaughter's husband.'

He stooped and kissed her hand, and Audrey's spirits revived a little as she remembered that Uncle Radcliffe had himself spoken somewhat similar words as they climbed the fells in the dark, and had reminded her that she was, after all, serving her lover.

Still there remained with her the heavy sense that a concealment was being practised, an unavoidable concealment, but one that was nevertheless hateful to her; while Henry Brownrigg also felt somewhat hampered by his determination to say nothing to her as to the story of the Borrowdale Bogle, and his suspicions and precautions with regard to it.

A silence fell between them. Audrey's eyes wandered to the wooded heights between Barrow Gill and Lowdore, and she wondered how Uncle Radcliffe was faring in the cave where she had hidden him, and thought with a shudder of the lonely walk she must take on Wednesday night. Henry meantime fell into a reverie, weighing the chances for and against his capturing John Radcliffe, and wondering whether he could ply Audrey with a few questions without putting her too much upon her guard. He started a little when at last she spoke.

'Did you say, Henry, that King William had been wounded during a battle?'

'No, they say he had just breakfasted beside the

Boyne; on the opposite side of the river the Popish army was drawn up, and just as the King mounted his horse a ball struck him. No doubt by this time the battle they were then expecting has been fought. What would one not give to know which side had won! But news travels slowly; all this happened some days ago, yet the news only reached us here this afternoon.'

She sighed. 'Let us talk no more of public matters,' she said wearily. 'Instead let us plan the arrangements for our wedding. You will not mind, Henry, if it is quite a quiet wedding; it is too soon after our sorrow to have any merrymaking.'

'I mind nothing so long as you will not again postpone the day. Remember that we arranged it should be in August. You are sure your grandfather was not hurt by my visit the other night? You see it was a matter of official duty. I had no choice but to search for this refugee.'

'Oh, my grandfather understood that, and indeed he said you seemed to dislike your task,' said Audrey.

'What is Mr. John Radcliffe like?' said Henry Brownrigg, watching her narrowly as he put the question.

She sprang quickly to her feet and took his hand in hers. 'Come into the house,' she said. 'His picture hangs in the hall and you can judge for yourself.'

'Well!' thought Henry, 'evidently the uncle is not here, or she would not suggest my coming in.'

'I'll not come in,' he said. 'It would scarcely be courteous to Sir Nicholas after the other night. Tell me what your Uncle Radcliffe is like.'

'Well, the picture was painted some years ago, but in those days of periwigs men change but little; no doubt it is still very much like him,' said Audrey reflectively. 'He is standing very erect and looks active and vigorous; his eyes look bright and eager, and his perwig is of a

rather bright light-brown colour, much like my hair. He is twenty years younger than my grandfather, and has always, they tell me, enjoyed the best of health, so that people often fancy he is younger than he really is.'

'Is he a tall man?'

'I remember once hearing my grandfather say that he was a somewhat small-made man, much about the same height and build as Michael Derwent,' said Audrey, surprised by the calmness of her own manner.

'Derwent can't be more than five foot seven or eight,' said Henry Brownrigg, drawing himself up in the proud consciousness of his six feet three inches, and unable to resist a sneer at his old schoolfellow. 'I well remember what a puny little fellow he was as a boy. Well, my love, I must not linger here. I shall see you again doubtless in a few days' time.'

For a moment Audrey felt relieved that he should go; then reproaching herself with the feeling, she took leave of him with a tenderness and a warmth of demonstration which she seldom manifested.

'Oh! if only Uncle Radcliffe were safely out of the country!' she thought to herself as she felt Henry's strong arm about her. 'How restful and safe all would be! How Henry would shield me and care for me!'

'Clearly Audrey has not seen this Jacobite kinsman,' reflected the Under-Sheriff, 'yet, for all that, he may very likely be sheltering in the neighbourhood. That priest with his humbugging knee—all a sham, no doubt—would be quite capable of hiding him, for he knows the fells better than anyone about here. I shall keep on the alert and have my sentinels in readiness.'

CHAPTER XXIV

Recollections of Michael Derwent.

THE chronicle begun long ago in the quiet of the long vacation at Cambridge hath remained untouched for many months. For by the time I had written of my arrival in London, of my first impressions of Sir William Denham's household, and of the eventful evening at Whitehall when I first encountered Mr. James Calverley, there seemed little time for writing. For London, I perceive, is a place where all is haste and bustle, where men talk, and argue, and jostle up against each other, but where it is no easy task to think, or to read or to write in peace and quiet.

Nevertheless, that which is not done at once remains undone, for now, sitting in solitude in my room on St. Herbert's Isle, that brief stay in London seems to me like a dream, and for the most part a dream I care not to dwell upon. Specially I would fain free my mind from the remembrance of the hours spent with James Calverley and his friends, for though at the time they had a strange fascination about them, I know well that had it not been for other influences, these subtle men, with their arguings and their specious reasoning, would have had me ere long in their power and used me as their tool. London, however, though it brought me face to face with evil of every sort, brought me also the best of gifts. For, apart from the gift of a good mother, and a true and loving wife,—luxuries which fate had

denied to me,—there is no gift to be compared to the friendship of an unselfish and pure-minded woman.

During these hard days after my return, when the knowledge that Audrey was close at hand, though for ever cut off from me, made me at times well-nigh desperate, it was the thought of Mistress Mary Denham, and of the quiet courage with which she lived her life, that proved my best support. Many a time, too, I lived over again our visit to the Friends' meeting-house and the memorable day when we heard George Fox; while to her also I owed introductions to many of the most noteworthy people, to the sweet-natured Lady Temple, to the delightful family of the Evelyns, and to the Dean of St. Paul's. I am sure Dean Tillotson's broad-hearted charity and practical religion keep many men nowadays from drifting into utter unbelief when sickened by the bickerings and wranglings of those who make more of their pet dogmas than of Christianity itself,—which, as the Dean teaches, is Love. Dogmatic teachers always make me think of physicians who, while the patient is dying of starvation and want of care, insist that he shall first rehearse the names science has given to every bone in the body. Worse still, the physicians do not agree with each other and quarrel while the poor wretch is at his last gasp; one set declaring that he will regain health by certain movements of the arms, the other faction contending that the legs are the important members.

Unless some sensible good Samaritan chances to pass that way, the victim is apt to expire, muttering the words of the dying *Mercutio*:

‘A plague on both your houses!’

I had written thus far when one of the children ran into the room bearing a letter which had been brought over by a messenger from Keswick. I saw at once that

it was from Mistress Mary Denham, and breaking the seal,—a very dainty one in green wax, bearing the device ‘*Sursum corda*,’—I read the following lines:

‘SIR :

We were glad to learn that you had made a safe journey to the north, and regret much that Sir Wilfrid should have found so dire a foe as the small-pox to greet him at Isel. Your description of the solitude of the island on Derwentwater reads strangely here in London, and I think from what you say that it is something of a trial to you to be once more in a place where all outwardly is the same as in old days, while in other respects so much has altered. But, after all, this letter is not just to say that I am sorry for your loneliness, but to tell you of a matter which I think may interest you. This day Lady Temple came to see me, and we spoke much of the arrest of the Jacobite plotters and of all suspected persons. The most noteworthy is her Majesty’s uncle, my Lord Clarendon, who is now lodged in the Tower, and that Catholic gentleman you used to meet at Mr. Winter’s chambers—Mr. Anthony Sharp—is also arrested: it seems that he is a priest in disguise. Lady Temple told me that a warrant was also made out for the arrest of Mr. James Calverley, but that he had contrived to leave London. Now comes the strange part: it seems that Calverley was but an assumed name, and that he is in truth a Mr. John Radcliffe, younger brother and heir to Sir Nicholas Radcliffe, your friend on Lord’s Island. This will perhaps explain Father Noel’s friendship with him, and the civility he showed to you. The poor Queen is well-nigh distracted with anxiety and grief, for indeed the country seems to be in great danger, and she scarcely knows who may be reckoned on as trustworthy friends and advisers. I think there never can have been a more devoted wife than she; ’tis a grievous pity that his Majesty is merely a brave soldier, and scarce merits such a noble woman as his Queen. I fear, from what Lady Temple says, he is one of those who will learn, too late, rightly to value what they have lost, and will be of the many husbands who erect fine tombstones with touching epitaphs to their wives, yet when they were living could not even be faithful to them.

My uncle sends you his kind remembrances, and says that if you have leisure you would do him a great service by making

that collection of all the moths to be found in the woods surrounding Derwentwater which we talked of before you left London. He and his friend Dr. Martin Lister have already received fine specimens from diverse counties. Dr. Lister says the best way to set about it is to go out when it is dark, having previously, by day, put treacle on the trunks of certain trees. This attracts the moths, and you will find no difficulty in capturing them. Yet have a care, or someone may mistake you for a highwayman, or for the ghost you told me of which haunts Borrowdale ! There is as yet no book writ upon moths, though the late Mr. Willoughby had often desired to attempt the study of them, but died before he could carry it out. I hope to secure some at Katterham, and should you have an opportunity of sending any specimens to London they had best be directed to Sir William, for I shall be with my uncle, Sir Joscelyn Heyworth, at the Court House for the next two months. Mr. Wharnccliffe has just been to call upon us. He says that to-day he met Mr. Winter on the stairs at his chambers in King's Bench Walk, and that, happening to mention something as to Mr. Calverley's escape, Mr. Winter said he had heard a rumour that he had fled to France, but knew not if 'twas true. I give it you for what 'tis worth, knowing that you had some liking for him and, though not approving his views, would scarce wish him to be thrown into prison merely on suspicion. I can never think of the inside of our prisons without a shudder, for truly they are hells on earth. It hurts one to see the poor souls being dragged to Tyburn, perhaps just for some petty theft, and yet I am not sure that it is not a better fate than to linger on in gaol, for God is merciful and men are not. We were trying the other night, as we read Willoughby's book on birds, to remember some of your Borrowdale names for them, but I could not get further than "Jack-eslop" for a kite, and "Joanna-ma-cronk" for a heron ! I think you must have more time in your part of the world, or you would never use such long names ! Do not forget to tell us any observations you make, as to any kind of animal life, for it is the one thing now which interests Sir William. As he grows older he takes less and less interest in politics, having, I think, lived through too many changes to be surprised at anything. But they say he never was at heart aught but a naturalist ; and Uncle Heyworth has a story of how, when he was made prisoner in the civil war, and

Uncle Denham and my father were appointed as the officers who were responsible for him, Uncle Denham crowded up the little room they shared in Farnham Castle, with spiders and newts and frogs, on which he was experimenting ; these creatures—not being on *parole*—were always escaping, while poor Uncle Heyworth had to stay, eating his heart out as a prisoner of war.

However, I ramble on about the past when at any moment we may have the French fleet in the Thames, and London attacked. It were better to despatch this letter to you at once, specially as my cousin Rupert promises to take it himself as far as York and to send it on safely from there.

With kind remembrances from us all,

I rest, your friend,

MARY DENHAM.

Written at Norfolk Street,
This 27th day of June, 1690.'

There was not a word in the letter of Audrey Radcliffe, and yet I knew that Mistress Denham understood why it was that this enforced stay on St. Herbert's Isle was so specially hard to me. She knew my story and readily divined much that I had never told her in words. More than once we had spoken, however, of the difficulties of the position and of the best course to steer. Nor was I without a shrewd suspicion that all this study of moths was with a view to giving me something fresh to think of, and to keep me from dwelling on those past memories which made every part of Derwentwater and Borrowdale a place of pain and peril to me.

Turning over the sheet once more, I read her words about James Calverley, and marvelled to think that I had never guessed his secret. For now, that I thought of it, I well remembered his picture, taken in early life, and had often looked at it in the hall at Lord's Island. No doubt that subtle attraction he had possessed for me lay in his unknown kinship with Audrey. And then a fresh thought rushed into my mind and put me to no

small perturbation. Had he and his friends succeeded in bringing me over to the Romish Church, would they have tried to stop the Brownrigg marriage, which was so distasteful to them? Was this perhaps what Father Noel had all the time been aiming at? Was this his reason for deliberately forcing me that time in the previous autumn to be as much as might be in Audrey's presence? It seemed possible, and, much as I hated Henry Brownrigg, the thought of playing so mean a part made me recoil. A thousand times I blessed Mistress Denham for having saved me from falling a victim to the arguments of Anthony Sharp and James Calverley, and with an effort I banished Audrey's face from my mind and plunged desperately into the dreary work of correcting my pupils' Latin exercises.

The next few days were eventful. First came the news of the terrible disaster off Beachy Head, and dread of a French invasion of the southern countries filled the whole land with a panic which is indescribable. Then soon after came the woeful tidings that King William had been wounded in Ireland. By the time the news reached Paris, they told us afterwards that the wound had become magnified into a fatal wound, and the French had burnt his effigy in triumph, together with the effigy of the devil bearing a scroll with the saying—'I have been waiting for thee these two years.'

It was, I must own, in great dejection that I rowed into Keswick on the afternoon of Wednesday, the 9th July, to learn if any fresh news had been received. It was one of those cloudy days with every now and then bright gleams of sunshine, which we so often get in these parts. To the north the great mass of Skiddaw was flecked with purple shadows, while the Vale of Newlands was filled with mist, out of which the mountains rose like rocks from sea-foam.

Just as I gained the landing-stage and moored the boat

the sun shone out gloriously, and, looking back, I saw that grand vista in which you look up the whole length of Derwentwater with its wooded shores and islands, and from end to end of craggy Borrowdale, the rugged heights of Glaramara blocking the southern end, and Castle Crag guarding what we call the jaws of the dale. As I looked, the bell of Crosthwaite Church rang out a joyful peal,—surely that must mean that good news had arrived. Hurrying into the little market town, I eagerly inquired, and soon learnt that the bells were being rung because King William's wound had proved to be of the slightest and because, on the following day, he had gained a great victory over King James, who had deserted his army and was flying with all speed to France, leaving the poor Irish who had rallied in his support to shift for themselves as best they might. I rowed back, feeling as though a huge load had been lifted off my heart, but as I passed Lord's Island my own personal trouble seized upon me once more, for there, down by the shore, feeding her swans, stood Audrey, and catching sight of me, she gave the clear, ringing call with which we had always signalled to each other as children. I had no choice but to obey her, but I determined not to quit the boat.

‘What are the church bells ringing for?’ she asked eagerly. ‘I had heard of no wedding.’

I remembered with a pang that probably the next time they rang a peal it would be for her marriage with the Under-Sheriff, which they told me had been fixed for next month; it almost seemed as if she read my thoughts, for suddenly a burning flush rose in her cheeks and her eyes grew bright as if with unshed tears.

‘The bells ring because of King William's victory in the battle of the Boyne,’ I replied, ‘and because King James has deserted the Irish as he deserted the English,

and is by this time, no doubt, safely in France. The news has been long in reaching us, for the battle, they say, was fought on the first of this month; we are always somewhat behind the time in these parts.'

'Then you think the country is out of danger?' she asked with anxious eyes.

'Yes, people say that a battle so decisive must practically end the war in Ireland, and the French King will scarcely stand by such a poltroon as King James. Truly he seems to think only of himself! He is curiously lacking in his father's courage. How is Father Noel's knee?'

'It still disables him,' said Audrey. 'Will you not come in and see him? He will want to hear the news.'

But I was not minded to stay longer than I need in her company, which had no good effect on me, while the prospect of telling news which must be unwelcome to one of Father Noel's way of thinking, did not attract me. I made a hurried excuse, and wishing her good-day, rowed off to St. Herbert's Isle.

I wondered that she did not hasten into the house to carry the news to her grandfather; perhaps she felt that it would be unpleasant to bear him news which could hardly fail to pain any Roman Catholic. At any rate, she stood there on the shore, now and then throwing a bit of bread to her swans, but always with her eyes following my boat. I watched her till I could distinguish nothing but her black dress against the green of the trees in the background, and a bright gleam where the sunshine fell upon her hair. All the time, through the aching of my heart, there was an odd consciousness of having lived through this before, not only this slow separation—this parting long drawn out—from Audrey, but also the passionate inward appeal against a fate which seemed always to be against me.

Then, suddenly, as I glanced towards Lowdore, it all

came back to me. I was once more a little child, sobbing on the grass, and Audrey's boat had become a mere speck in the distance.

'Snoggles!' I had cried, 'was it wrong of me to be picked up under a bush?'

And dear old Zinogle had allowed me to bury my face in his rough frieze coat, and had said that I need feel no shame, and that hope was to be my guiding star.

Well, just now there did not seem much left to hope for—only, in fact, to hope that I might live through this evil time bravely, not bitterly, and prove myself not wholly unworthy of the friendship of Mistress Denham.

Thinking of her thus, I resolved to go mothing that evening, and hailing two of the children who stood by the landing-place on St. Herbert's Isle, bade them run and ask Dickon's wife for some treacle. Then we all three rowed across to the woods on the eastern shore of Derwentwater, about opposite the little islet of Rampsholme, and, having prepared the tree-trunks according to Mistress Denham's directions, returned home to get ready such things as would be wanted that night—a dark lantern, a wallet, and sundry little boxes for the moths I hoped to capture.

The house on Herbert's Isle was but small, and now, that some of the Isel servants were sick with the small-pox, we lived very quietly, there being on the island only myself and my two pupils, and Dickon and his wife who lived always in the island house, taking charge of it and waiting upon us. It must have been about ten o'clock that I bade Dickon good-night, telling him that I hoped to return from my mothing expedition in about an hour's time, and carrying with me the key of the house door, although, indeed, it was scarce likely that any should try to enter during my absence.

The night was cloudy, though, being still early in

July, it was not so dark but that one could see the outlines of the mountains and make out easily enough the place where we had landed in the afternoon. Any sort of hunt is not without pleasure to a man, and I confess to having forgotten everything else in the eager pursuit of my treacle-lured victims, which, truly enough, were on the tree-trunks, as Mistress Denham had said, when the sound of steps and voices close by made me start violently.

‘Tut, tut, man,’ said one of the voices, ‘’twas nowt but thy fancy.’

‘Nay, ’twas the bogle,’ said the other, and I at once recognised the voice of Mounsey, the miller of Lowdore.

‘Hullo, Mounsey!’ I cried, willing to relieve the man’s abject terror. ‘’Tis not the Borrowdale Bogle. ’Tis I, Michael Derwent. What are you doing here at this time of night?’

‘Why, sir, I’m main glad to see you,’ gasped the miller. ‘Me and Matt Birkett of Millbeck have been set by the Under-Sheriff to find out the truth of this Borrowdale Bogle that has been seen by many of late. Mr. Brownrigg, he will get to the bottom of it, he says, and if so be it be one of the lads dressed up just to scare the women-folk, he says he’ll have him set in the stocks. My gude wife has been ill ever since the night she saw the bogle by Barrow Gill.’

‘Oh! I heard it had been seen,’ I said, laughing. ‘And Tim Grisedale saw it first of all, I understand. Who else has come across it?’

‘Well, sir, there be Nanny, the dairymaid at Ashness Farm. She has been scared nearly out of her senses, for, waking at dawn and going down to see some sickly chicken she was nursing up, she saw the bogle making as though it would drown itself in the beck, but couldna drown, being only a spirit. Then it wrung its hands very sorrowfully, and before she could stir for fright,

it had disappeared in Ashness woods, whereat Nanny fell a-screeching like an owl, and frightened the whole household.'

'Mr. Brownrigg,' said Matt Birkett, a dour-looking man, who spoke now for the first time, 'puts little faith in ghosts and bogles, and thinks more likely 'tis some worthless loon, a thieving Scot, or a highwayman. But, after all, sir, it may have been just yoursel', if I might mak' bold to ask what you are doing.'

'I am catching moths,' I said, showing them one of my prisoners. They stared at me so incredulously that I thought they fancied me mad. 'But this is the first night I have been out,' I explained; 'so the ghost has still to be accounted for.'

''Tis blawin' up for rain,' said Mounsey. 'Coom to the mill, Matt Birkett, and shelter awhile. Nowt can pass by the mill, be it bogle or body, without my seeing it from the window of my gude wife's kitchen.'

'Good-night, sir,' said Birkitt, still eyeing me suspiciously as I added another moth to my collection.

'Good-night,' I said cheerfully. 'Good luck to you in your bogle-hunt.'

Alas! had I but known what would follow, those were the very last words that would have crossed my lips.

The two men tramped off in the direction of Lowdore, and by the time their steps had died away in the distance, I had all my boxes full, and was about to go back to the boat, when something made me glance along the mule track which led to Keswick. My heart began to throb painfully, for, gliding swiftly towards me, I saw the Borrowdale Bogle. My lantern had gone out, but by this time my eyes had grown so accustomed to the midsummer twilight that I could clearly make out the details of the cavalier dress which Mounsey had described to us in the Market Square on the previous

Saturday. The wind, which was blowing strongly from the southwest, blew back the folds of the short cloak it was wearing, and revealed the white shirt beneath and the long, thin hands, which seemed to grip fast hold of a cord slung over its shoulder, as though the bogle carried some burden. There was something so eerie in the noiseless way in which it steadily approached me that I would have given worlds to turn and rush down to my boat. I am ashamed to say that it cost me a hard struggle to move forward and meet this uncanny creature; however, I did move slowly up to the path, and almost immediately the ghost stood stock-still. At this my courage rose a little.

‘If it tries to escape I will pursue it,’ I thought to myself, ‘and if it comes on, why, it must surely cross the plank bridge. I will stand here on the bank and see it face to face.’

There had, during the last two or three days, been much rain, and the little beck which flows down bewixt Walla Crag and Falcon Crag had become a torrent. It came roaring and tumbling over its stony bed, while the wind moaned among the trees and heavy drops of rain began to fall. Still the ghost stood motionless, and still I kept guard by the bridge until I began to wish it would come on and end the tension of this waiting. At last it slowly glided towards me, and I candidly own that my knees began to knock together. If only the mill had been nearer I should have called to Birkett and Mounsey merely for the comfort of their fleshly presence. For, alone in a desolate bit of country late at night, a ghost is not companionable. The creature, too, as it approached me more nearly, raised one of its long, bony hands and pointed a ghostly finger in my direction, at which, I knew not why, a cold shudder ran through me, and again the impulse to make for the boat was well-nigh irresistible. After all, what was to

be gained by facing this Borrowdale Bogle? It was Henry Brownrigg who wanted to fathom the mystery. Why should I put myself to all this discomfort when the Under-Sheriff was the last man in the world I cared to oblige?

CHAPTER XXV

AUDREY, although a brave girl, had been of late much out of health, and her nerves had by no means recovered from the shock of her mother's death. Hence it was natural enough that, on the Wednesday night as she rowed across to Stable Hill, and sprang ashore with the provisions for John Radcliffe, she should be a prey to all sorts of terrors. As she crossed the field a sound of something breathing close by made her tremble from head to foot, but the breather proved to be only a cow; while another sound, which seemed horribly like footsteps pursuing her, turned out to be nothing but one of the farm horses cropping the grass. How it was she could not tell, but the walk along the mule track, which had seemed quite short when she was with her uncle, seemed now in her loneliness tediously long. Whenever she looked up through the trees, the fir-fringed outlines of Walla Crag always towered above her, until she almost despaired of ever reaching Ashness woods with her heavy burden. She was just wondering to herself whether Tim Grisedale and Meg Mounsey had spread the alarm in Grange as to the bogle, when, to her horror, she saw the figure of a man emerge from among the trees by the shore. She stood still in mortal terror. Perhaps he had not seen her? But, alas! there could be little doubt as to that, for he remained fixedly watching her, and at length took up a position close to the foot-bridge which would compel her to pass him quite close unless, indeed, she turned back. But Audrey

came of a stock which did not approve of turning back, and, at last, taking her courage in both hands, she resolved to go on, hoping to scare this fellow as she had scared the shepherd. Drawing herself to her full height, she raised a threatening hand and pointed away into the distance, hoping that the man would turn to see what she was indicating. He moved slightly, and, without looking at him, she made a dash for the bridge. Then instantly she felt strong arms thrown round her, and the man dragged her back from the plank.

‘So,’ he cried, ‘you are no ghost, after all! What do you mean, you miscreant, by frightening the dales-folk in this way?’

Then, in her rapture of relief, she turned and faced him; nay, she clung to him, sobbing.

‘Oh, Mic! is it you, after all? I was so frightened, so dreadfully frightened!’ she cried.

For a minute she recollected nothing, so exquisite was the sense that all her perils were over; that Michael, her best friend, her old playmate, could be trusted to bring her safely through all her difficulties. How tenderly, yet how closely, he held her! But he was absolutely silent, and all at once there flashed back into her mind the thought which her uncle had first suggested to her only a few evenings before. Could it indeed be that he loved her? Did that account for his formal manner that afternoon and for this strange silence now? It was well that she could not see his face, for the passion and pain in it would have terrified her. As it was, some instinct made her come to his help by gently freeing herself from him, and turning to face the wind, he tore off his cravat like a man who was choking.

‘Did I startle you so much?’ she asked.

He laughed wildly; it seemed so strange to him that she did not understand it was love for her that had driven all else from his mind, that it was the vehemence

of a passion long controlled but still existent which had surged up within him, and that the intolerable pain in his throat made speech for the moment impossible.

But he quickly regained his self-mastery, and, turning towards her again, wrapped her cloak about her and picked up the heavy bag she had let fall.

‘Where can I carry this for you?’ he said, speaking now very gently. Yet there was something in his tone which made her cry. ‘Don’t, Audrey! Don’t!’ he said pleadingly. ‘It is an eerie place and a dark night for you to be walking about alone. Only let me help you. I will ask no questions.’

‘You are so good, Mic!’ she said, instinctively falling back to her old childish name for him. ‘But, though you do not ask, I must tell you the whole truth, for maybe this will bring you into trouble. Leave me to go on alone. I am on an errand to one of my own kin; for me it is a clear duty, but for you, I doubt folk would call it by a harsher name.’

Instantly he knew that the fugitive John Radcliffe must be sheltering in the neighbourhood.

‘I can guess your errand,’ he said. ‘I learnt by a letter from London to-day that there is a warrant out against your great-uncle; ’twas thought he had escaped to France, but I suppose he is sheltering here.’

‘I am glad you have guessed,’ said Audrey; ‘I am going now to him with food, and also to take him the news from Ireland. Now leave me, Mic. I know the way well, and it is not likely that I shall meet with anyone else.’

‘Indeed, I wish I could feel so sure of that,’ said Michael, ‘but Mr. Brownrigg has set Mounsey and another fellow to track this Borrowdale Bogle. Very likely, if he happens to know that Mr. Radcliffe is suspected of being concerned in the plot, he calls it a ghost-hunt, but in his heart he suspects that the ghost is

a Jacobite. You had a very narrow escape to-night, for Mounsey and Birkett were on this very spot but a little while since, and at first took me for the ghost. They have gone on now to the mill. Where have you sheltered your uncle?’

‘In Ashness woods, in our old place there.’

‘Then let us come here at once. I’ll row you in my boat as far as Barrow Bay, and then, if the coast is clear and Birkett still safely at Lowdore, we can climb the fell together.’

Audrey was so much startled to hear of her lover’s precautions as to the ghost that she could not hesitate any more as to allowing Michael to run the risk of helping her uncle.

‘Henry does know that there is a warrant out against Uncle Radcliffe,’ she said. ‘Only the other night he came to search our house for him. That is why he is obliged to shelter among the hills.’

‘He will not be safe even there,’ said Michael, leading the way, as he spoke, down the wooded bank to Scarf Close Bay, where his boat was moored. ‘The people at the farm have a story of seeing the bogle disappear into Ashness wood early one morning. We must somehow manage to get your uncle away, or assuredly the Under-Sheriff will get hold of him. Now, we had best not talk, for water carries the sound of voices as nothing else does. Lie down in the bottom of the boat and I will cover you with my cloak; the bag for your head to rest on. So! Now, I’ll soon row to Barrow Bay.’

Audrey crept down into the friendly shelter of the boat with a restful sense that the worst was over. Then, too, there was something natural to her in taking part in an adventure with Michael. It brought back the days of their childhood so vividly. Yet, although as she nestled down in the stern she could almost have

fancied herself a child again, Michael had, on the other hand, developed in a curious way. She found herself looking up to him as though he had been some years older than herself. All too soon they reached Barrow, and Michael, having carefully reconnoitred and found the coast clear, came back to help her from the boat, and swinging the bag across his shoulder, walked with her to John Radcliffe's sheltering-place.

'I ought to tell you,' he said, when they found themselves in the wood, 'that in the letter I had to-day from Mistress Mary Denham she tells me that Mr. John Radcliffe is none other than the Mr. Calverley to whom Father Noel gave me a letter of introduction in London. I met him many times, never of course guessing that he was akin to you. That, however, doubtless explains the curious attraction he always had for me.'

Those last words slipped from him inadvertently. Audrey blushed, and was glad that he could not see her face.

'Who is Mistress Mary Denham?' she asked.

'A very great friend of mine,' he said warmly. 'The niece of Sir Wilfrid's friend, with whom we stayed in London.'

Now, 'friend' was a word which, like the word 'servant,' bore in those days more than one meaning. Audrey wondered whether, after all, Michael was this lady's lover. She ought, no doubt, to have welcomed this idea as a relief from the notion that he had loved her and was still Henry's rival. But, for some unexplained reason, she did not welcome it. It somehow disturbed her.

'I am your oldest friend,' she said, laughing a little. 'I believe I could find it in my heart to be jealous of this fine lady in London.'

'You do not know me, if you can speak like that,' he said, hurt by her tone. 'She is to me like an elder

sister, whereas you—you——’ he broke off abruptly, choking with emotion.

‘I don’t understand,’ said Audrey, but the tears in her voice belied the words; she was beginning to understand only too well.

‘You never did understand me,’ said Michael, reproachfully. ‘You thought when I came back from Cambridge as a man that we could once more be comrades as when we were children in Borrowdale. You played with me that time at Raby Castle; at least it was play to you. Take care of that branch!’

He turned to hold it back for her, and felt two hot tears fall on his hand.

‘Audrey!’ he cried, dismayed to think of the confession into which he had been betrayed; ‘forgive me! I meant to have kept silence. I have tried my very utmost to avoid you. All I ask now is to help you in this affair with Mr. John Radcliffe. Since Mr. Brownrigg can’t help you in this I have at least the right to shield you from danger. How they could let you come all this way alone at night I can’t conceive.’

‘My grandfather liked it ill enough,’ said Audrey, regaining her composure with an effort, ‘but there was no one else. Father Noel can scarcely put his foot to the ground, and old Duncan—the only other person who knows—was far too rheumatic to hobble all this way even had he known of the hiding-place. I don’t deserve it, Mic, but I think God sent you to take care of me.’

Her tone, and the humility of the words, brought him back to his bearings. Once more he became his best self—manly, chivalrous, and self-forgetful. He began to discuss with her the best way of getting the fugitive to the sea-coast, and presently Audrey gave the cry which she had agreed on as the signal with her uncle, and they heard his low whistle in response. In

a few minutes more they had gained the cave, and John Radcliffe sprang up from his bed of heather and ling to greet Audrey. He had been reading by the light of a small lantern carefully screened from view by a boulder; but when he saw that his niece had someone with her a sudden look of terror passed over his face.

‘Who is this?’ he exclaimed. ‘How is it that you are not alone?’

‘Uncle,’ cried Audrey, ‘you are in no danger; this is Michael Derwent, who accidentally came across me near Scarf Close Bay.’

‘What! Mr. Derwent?’ exclaimed the refugee, looking sharply into the face of Audrey’s companion.

Michael stood just outside the cave, and the lantern clearly revealed every feature of John Radcliffe’s face. He saw surprise, perplexity, doubt, and misgiving imprinted on it; then, at last, came a sort of mischievous amusement, strange enough when one considered his position.

‘Come in, Mr. Derwent,’ he said, holding out his hand and giving him a cordial welcome. ‘I know you had your suspicions of me the night we last met, when that fool Enderby came in with his talk about St. Germain and his hints about the lemon. You were an honourable guest, and went away and kept silence. I know you are one who can be trusted.’

‘Sir,’ said Michael, ‘I am not like Mr. Brownrigg, in an official position, and am not minded to go hunting the brother of one who has always been good to me. But I must tell you frankly that I abhor your plots and will have no hand in helping you unless you promise to leave England as soon as possible.’

John Radcliffe laughed good-humouredly.

‘Well spoken, my boy,’ he said. ‘And, as for me, I abhor your views, but I’m hanged if I won’t stand by you when King James comes to his own again and the

faith is once more established in England. You are just the sort to go to the stake for some trumpery opinion, but curse me if I would let the best Catholic in the land roast you. Come, sit down and let us sup together. You have had a long walk. What's in that bag, Audrey?'

'I have brought you fresh food, uncle,' she said, sitting down by him on the heather, 'but there is news which first you will want to hear. King William has defeated the Catholic army in a great battle on the banks of the Boyne, and King James has deserted the Irish and has fled back to France.'

John Radcliffe's face fell; he muttered a deep oath.

'That's bad hearing,' he said. 'It means that all is lost. Oh, what a miserable thing it is to have for king and leader a man who thinks first of saving his own skin! Your Dutchman lacks the fine manner of the Stuarts, but, curse him, he is at any rate a brave soldier and a born leader. Well, my pretty niece, the game is over. I throw up the sponge. And now the question is, How am I to get to the sea-coast and make my way to Ireland or to France?'

'It must be done quickly,' said Michael. 'Indeed I think we had best shift your hiding-place to-night, sir,' and then together they told him of the serious risk he ran of being discovered by the Under-Sheriff.

'Mounsey and Birkett watch the mule track from Keswick to Borrowdale,' said Audrey, 'and we could scarcely escape through Grange, but surely by boat we might safely manage it. Pursuit would be difficult.'

'You must somehow start by to-morrow night, at latest, for Workington,' said Michael. 'There you will easily be able to take ship. With your permission, sir, I will go to-night to Lord's Island and talk things over with Father Noel.'

John Radcliffe listened in silence to this suggestion;

a sense of shame stole over him—shame such as he had never before experienced. He looked across the shallow cave to the place where Michael sat, his fine, expressive face clearly outlined against the grey rock; a boyish face still, though bearing signs of that inner conflict without which no really strong character can be developed.

Should he, as Father Noel urged him, own the truth? The words trembled upon his lips, but then he reflected that Michael's indignation against the unknown father who had deserted him had been expressed in no measured terms in London—that he had then been only thirsting to discover the man for the sake of avenging his mother. He dared not own the truth now, for might not Michael refuse to help him in his escape? Might he not even, in his just wrath, denounce him to the authorities?

There was silence in the cave for some minutes; both Audrey and her uncle instinctively watched Michael, who was evidently deep in thought. Outside the rain pattered down steadily, in the way truly characteristic of Cumberland.

‘I have it,’ said Michael at length. ‘This rain of the last few days is all in our favour, for the Derwent is fuller than I have ever known it. My plan is this. Let us take Mr. Radcliffe to-night to our hiding-place in the Happy Valley; that is a place where not a soul but ourselves is likely to go. Hidden there among the brushwood, he will be safe for twenty-four hours, and we will come to-morrow night, landing opposite Manesty meads, and get him safely into our boat. Then we can all three row the length of Derwentwater, and at the outlet at the further end, where the Derwent flows towards Bassenthwaite, I will to-morrow moor one of the St. Herbert's Isle boats, and will stow away in it a disguise of some sort for Mr. Radcliffe. He and I together can then row to Bassenthwaite, where he can

be set down well on his way to Workington by dawn, while you will have quietly rowed back alone the short distance to Lord's Island.'

'Why not take the one boat the whole distance?' said John Radcliffe.

'It will be better for Audrey to go home,' he replied; 'the risk would be less for all of us. Besides, it will be light by the time I can return, for, though we shall rush down the Derwent easily enough with the current, it will be stiff work getting the boat back. If she were there with me, then suspicion would be roused, but that I should be out alone in one of Sir Wilfrid's boats will surprise nobody. It is well known that I go out fishing at all hours.'

'Well done, Mr. Derwent. 'You have the brain of a conspirator, or shall we say of a statesman?' said John Radcliffe, laughing. 'I would we could reckon you on our side, for we need men of your sort. Half of them are feather-pates like young Enderby, who betrayed us to you last month in my chambers.'

'It is quite possible that Father Noel will have some better scheme,' said Michael. 'He is a wonderful man for seeing every move in the game. But, unless you hear to the contrary, expect us to-morrow night at eleven o'clock.'

'But, Michael,' said Audrey, who had listened in silence to the arrangements, 'you are taking all the risk on yourself. It is not fair. What is my Uncle Radcliffe to you?'

'He is just that—your uncle,' said Michael, quietly, 'and the brother of Sir Nicholas, to whose kindness I owe much.'

John Radcliffe seemed about to speak, but thought better of it. As a man of the world he was ready to doubt the possibility of anyone undertaking so risky a piece of work when there was no hope of personal gain,

but however things turned out he could not see that in this matter Michael could be the gainer. He was forced to believe that the fellow acted really out of a chivalrous desire to help the girl he loved but could not wed. The only thing he could gain was the brief satisfaction of baffling the schemes of his rival, the Under-Sheriff, and a man would scarcely run the risk of being thrown into prison as aiding and abetting the Jacobites for such a momentary triumph as that.

‘Well, let us eat and drink!’ he said with a careless laugh, ‘for to-morrow who can say what may befall us? Mr. Derwent, here’s to our next merry meeting!’ and he drained a cup of the claret which old Duncan had stowed away in Audrey’s bag.

Then, having done their best to obliterate all traces of his stay in the cave, they tramped on through the woods above high Lowdore and Shepherd’s Crag, until they gained the tiny wooded glen hidden away by Grange Fell, which, as children, they had called the Happy Valley. At the southeastern part of this tiny dale, not far from a brawling mountain stream, there was a sheltered nook, where, long ago, they used to hide. They had to come right down to the stream before they could find it in the dim light; but Michael had always been good at making landmarks, and he had only to stand at a certain bend of the stream and face the east to discover the exact nook he wanted.

‘Here it is,’ he cried, ‘up this bank to the bent crab-tree; then there will be a thorn-bush just to your left, and higher up still an old bent yew. Close beneath that is a rock which will give you shelter from the rain; but beware that you do not stir from the wood after dawn, for you are near to Grange, and might come across the dales-folk.’

John Radcliffe promised to be most cautious, and they left him as soon as possible, for, judging it unsafe to

risk passing the mill, they were forced to climb the fell once more and tramp all round the way they had come over the crags and through the woods towards Ashness Farm. Nor could they afford to take the walk easily, being in terror lest the dawn should overtake them. It was then, as they hurried along in the drenching rain, that Audrey began to realise what a man Michael had become. Never once did he let her feel that it was aught but the most natural thing in the world that they two should be out together alone in that wild night, nor did he again in any way allude to himself or his own affairs. He talked of their plans for the rescue of Mr. Radcliffe; he even made himself talk a little of Henry Brownrigg, a sort of loyalty to the absent lover goading him on, though the words half choked him.

But Audrey, much as she looked up to him, could not then realise all that it cost him to pilot her through the dark wood, to feel her clinging to his arm, and to take her up and carry her over Barrow Beck when, worn out with fatigue, the rushing water made her turn giddy as she stood on the slippery stones. Later on she knew, but now she only felt a childlike gratitude to him for proving so trusty a helper.

At last they had scrambled down to Derwentwater, and, half dead with fatigue, she lay down once more in the boat and let Michael wrap his cloak round her and row her back to Lord's Island. Here Father Noel and old Duncan sat up waiting for her, and, after hurried explanations, she was glad to steal away to bed, leaving Michael to settle the details of the escape with the old priest.

'Did Mr. Radcliffe tell you nothing?' asked Father Noel, looking eagerly and hopefully into the young man's grave face.

'There was nothing to tell,' said Michael. 'I should in any case have recognised him, but oddly enough this

very day I had a letter telling me that James Calverley was but an assumed name, and that a warrant was out against Mr. Radcliffe.'

The poor old priest turned his head away in bitter disappointment. Surely, he thought, John Radcliffe might have availed himself of what seemed a heaven-sent opportunity of owning his son and heir.

'Mr. Radcliffe is a selfish man,' he said. 'Truly I think he deserves to be trapped by the Under-Sheriff. Why do you risk your safety for him?'

'I fear I don't think much of him,' said Michael, colouring, 'but it seems about the last chance I shall ever have of serving Audrey.'

All at once, without any warning, his strength gave way. The unspoken sympathy, the real comprehension of Father Noel, proved too much for him. Exhausted by the long struggle of the night, he buried his face in his arms and began to sob.

'Poor boy,' said the old priest kindly, 'life has been hard on you. Yet you are not the first who has had to stand by in silence and see the life of his best beloved wrecked by a mistaken marriage. Besides, there is room for hope even now. Already the marriage has been twice postponed. Who knows that it will ever take place?'

'The banns were asked on Sunday in St. Kentigern's,' said Michael, steadying his voice with an effort.

He was bitterly ashamed of having broken down, for he had been reared among the dales-folk of Cumberland, who bear the extremity of mental or bodily pain and make no sign. But Lucy Carleton's mother had been of Welsh origin, and there was much of the emotional Keltic nature in Michael.

'You see, sir,' he continued, 'it does not need much imagination to picture things as they are from Henry Brownrigg's point of view. He is moving heaven and

earth to get hold of the heir to the Goldrill estate, Mr. John Radcliffe. When he has got him safely out of the way Audrey will be the heiress, and everything will be at his disposal when once they are married.'

'Yes; no doubt that is his scheme,' said Father Noel, and then he fell into a fit of musing. It was terrible to him to know that the true heir was actually talking to him yet that he was absolutely powerless to end the great wrong which had been done to him. To break the secrecy of the confessional was, of course, out of the question, yet the sense of the horrible injustice which he had silently to witness almost maddened him. It was in vain that he reminded himself of the far worse secrets which had often been confided to priests; the most hideous conspiracy, the most horrible murder, would not just now seem to him so intolerable a load as this cowardice of John Radcliffe and the prospect of seeing Michael and Audrey, the two he had known and loved ever since their childhood, sacrificed to a man so tyrannical and narrow as Henry Brownrigg.

As a Catholic, he would have felt it his duty in other circumstances to urge upon Audrey the marriage with Mr. Salkeld, knowing that he would probably bring her over to his faith, but his kindly heart and his sense of fairness inclined him more and more to see things from Michael's side. If anything could make up to the boy for all these years of ignominy and loneliness it would be such a marriage. But he sighed as he thought of it, for indeed nothing seemed less likely to come about.

'Don't give up hope, lad,' he said, laying a kindly hand on Michael's shoulder. 'We Borrowdale folk know well enough that it's often the dark dawn that makes the fair day; while with bright sunshine at six in the morning you'll as likely as not have rain by noon. By the bye, this downpour will be somewhat rough on Mr. Radcliffe.'

‘Yes, but ’twill fill the Derwent, and that is all in our favour,’ said Michael. And therewith he fell to discussing his idea for the escape, while Father Noel groaned aloud to think that his knee made it impossible for him even to hobble down as far as the boat. He longed sorely to be able to lend a hand, and, above all, he longed for a chance of once more urging John Radcliffe to own the truth. However, it was clearly impossible for him to attempt anything of the sort; he could only have been a hindrance and a danger to the others.

CHAPTER XXVI

‘WELL, Birkett,’ said the Under-Sheriff, as the man appeared on Thursday morning at his room in Keswick, ‘have you traced the bogle yet?’

‘Noa, sir, but us thought us had ’en by the heels last night, nigh upon eleven o’clock. Howiver, it was, arter all, nowt but Mr. Derwent, who had rowed across from Herbert’s Isle.’

‘Mr. Derwent?’ said the Under-Sheriff, sitting up with an expectant look. ‘And pray what was he doing at that time of night?’

‘Why, sir, he had a dark lantern wid ’en, and, sure as I stan’ here, we was mortal flayte, thinkin’ him to be the bogle. But he just laughed and called out to Mounsey that he was gettin’ moths off the tree-trunks. And, Lor’ bless you, sir, he verily was doin’ it and a-puttin’ ’em in boxes in a daft fashion, as though the plaguy beasts was worth money. You know, sir, there still is folk that say he is a changelin’ and no’ a’together canny. Dickon over at Herbert’s Isle, he always said when he first set eyes on him he could hardly bring himself to touch the crittur for fear it should bewitch him.’

‘Pooh! there’s nothing uncanny about him,’ said the Under-Sheriff; ‘and as to being daft, why, man, his brains are only too sharp. Depend upon it, he was up to no good last night. He trapped you as well as the moths. They were just a blind. Look you, Birkett, hurry off to the best place for viewing the whole of

Derwentwater. Luckily it is clear enough after the rain. When you see a boat leaving Herbert's Isle, watch the direction it takes, and when Mr. Derwent comes ashore, just quietly follow him, taking care that he does not see that you are dogging his steps. Bring me word later on in the day as to his movements.'

'Now,' he exclaimed to himself as his messenger withdrew, 'I have at last got the clue I wanted. And to think Michael Derwent is embroiled as well! That is a stroke of luck I had not looked for. Depend upon it, he has been hand and glove with that traitor John Radcliffe all these months in London. I see it all now! That was the meaning of his guarded answer the other day when he spoke of the state of the country. The fellow would easily deceive Sir Wilfrid Lawson, who is too good-natured and too much of a joker to suspect sinister designs in those he has to deal with. I shouldn't wonder if the fellow is all the time a Papist, though he does put in an appearance still at Crosthwaite Church. He would be ready enough to change his views to curry favour with Father Noel and Sir Nicholas, and so promote his designs upon Audrey. Well, thank heaven, I have netted him now, or very nearly! And next month we shall be safely married.'

He rubbed his hands with satisfaction. It became more and more clear to him that the bogle was none other than John Radcliffe, the Jacobite, and Michael doubtless had been employed by Sir Nicholas to carry food to the fugitive in his hiding-place. No one would be better fitted for such a task, since he knew every inch of the country around.

Meanwhile Birkett waited the whole morning, and no boat put off from St. Herbert's Isle. At length, in the afternoon, when, what with the heat of the sun and his wakeful night, sleep had almost overpowered him, he descried a boat rowing slowly northward. Hasten-

ing down from the little eminence he had chosen for his watch-tower, he made his way to the point towards which the boat was steering, and was just near enough to see Michael mooring it in a bend of the river Derwent, a little to the northwest of the place where the Greta flows into it. Having secured the boat, Michael wandered off towards some trees at a little distance, where he went through a series of operations which utterly mystified his unknown watcher. He seemed to be smearing the tree-trunks with something sticky, and the sight made the superstitious Birkett shiver, for this distinctly savoured of the black art. Could the Borrowdale foundling be a wizard? Cautiously creeping after him, Birkett examined the mysterious tree-trunks and scratched his head with an air of hopeless bewilderment. Altogether he counted twelve trees bearing the mystic mark. Had he dared to think this curious and uncanny rite was anything so simple, he would have said that the trees had been just daubed with treacle or sugar. His imagination rose to such a height, however, that he was convinced the letter 'w' was traced upon one tree, and, full of glee at this great and brilliant discovery, he lost no time in following Michael at a discreet distance. Michael, having some spare time on his hands, crossed the fields slowly in the hot July sun and made his way to Hye Hill, to visit his old Quaker friend. As for Birkett, he lay in a shady nook on the grass not far off, and waited for a couple of hours, then tracked his man to a house in the Market Square, and returned to his master with a glowing account of his discovery.

‘Mr. Derwent be now in the house of old Snoggles, the fiddler,’ he said, ‘where I reckon he is safe to stay for some time. Do you think, sir, the letter stands for “*watched*,” and is to warn the bogle?’

‘Maybe,’ said Henry, with a smile. ‘But, anyhow,

Matt, go on with your watching. I think we shall trap the bogle at last, and I myself shall join to-night in the hunt. Go now and have a tankard of ale at the *Wool-pack*, but since the weather is hot, see that you sit on the bench outside the inn and keep an eye on Zinogle's door. Then, when Mr. Derwent comes out, track him once more, and be back here again by nine o'clock to tell me of his movements.'

Matt, mystified, but much elated by his success and the praise of the Under-Sheriff, bowed himself out, and Henry Brownrigg began to consider what other men beside Birkett and the constable he had better take with him for the evening's hunt. Was it possible that the letter traced on the tree stood for Whitehaven or Workington? And was the boat expressly moored there for John Radcliffe's use after dark?

Meanwhile Michael was leaning back in Zinogle's high-backed chair, forgetting his anxiety for a while as his old friend played the airs he most loved on his fiddle. He had come in tired and despondent, but it was impossible to listen long to Zinogle's cheerful music without becoming imbued with hope. And, as the old man played the melody known as *Lady Frances Nevill's Delight*, there floated back to Michael's mind the remembrance of Father Noel's words about the dark dawn bringing the fair day and the duty of eternal hope. Hope, too, was the idea which, from his childhood, the old fiddler had tried to imbue him with. Was he always to go on hoping, he wondered, and reflected, with a rueful smile, that, after all, hope was a diet upon which a man was apt to grow lean. Well, at least there was something to be done for Audrey that night. He was the one man in the world who could and would protect her now, and there was something stimulating in the thought that even Henry Brownrigg could not rob him of that privilege.

‘Bravo, Zinogle!’ he said, as the old man laid down his fiddle at last, ‘you always drive the devil out of me with your music. Promise me this, old friend, if ever I should be in trouble, don’t forget me, but come to me with your fiddle under your arm; then, even with death staring me in the face, I should get some comfort and pleasure.’

‘Trouble!’ said the German lightly. ‘Never think of it beforehand, boy. If it comes, why, you can be trusted to bear it like a man; but till then hope’s your mainstay. And as for coming to you, I should like to see anything that would hinder me! For, as you very well know, in this mad, topsy-turvy world you and my pipe and my fiddle are the only friends left me.’

And, taking up the violin once more, he played right cheerfully the old tune of ‘Love will find out a way.’

When that was ended, Michael, bidding his godfather farewell, left the house and the little town and wandered on to Castle Hill. The sun had just set, and Skiddaw and Latrigg were bathed in an unearthly radiance more beautiful than the colours of the opal. He stood for many minutes looking at that wonderful view, so familiar and so dear to him. There were the fells over which he and Audrey had climbed only a few hours before; there was the dear old Castle Crag, with its wilderness of trees guarding the entrance to Borrowdale, and in the background his beloved Glaramara, with its rugged heights all roseate in the evening glow, while far away, yet clearly to be seen, were Great End and Scawfell Pike, recalling many a day of adventure with Father Noel for his companion. Dearer than all, there was Derwentwater itself, lying like a silver shield down before him, with Lord’s Island and the old house, and a light already in one of the windows, which shone like a pale primrose in contrast with the ruddy gold and crimson of the sunset.

He looked down at it sadly, thinking how soon Audrey would have left it for ever—left it for that very doubtful happiness of being mistress of Millbeck Hall. And yet they still preached hope to him! Both Father Noel and old Zinogle always harped on that one string. The utmost, as it seemed, that he could now hope for was to be some protection to her on this eventful night; beyond that night no ray shone to lighten his darkness. He glanced with a sigh across the still water to the place where he knew his boat was moored, and then out beyond to the gleam of mellow light which showed where Bassenthwaite lay. By the time he reached that place in the early hours of the night, he and John Radcliffe would be alone, and Audrey would be safely once more on the island.

With sad eyes he turned away and went down the hill, until, finding a fallen tree-trunk which had been well baked by the long summer day's sunshine, he stretched himself on it and tried to spend the rest of his waiting-time in sleep. What were those words about hope in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*? Just as his eyelids grew heavy they darted back into his mind:

‘Hope is a lover’s staff! Walk hence with that,
And manage it against despairing thoughts.’

And it was just about that time that Matt Birkett returned to the Under-Sheriff with the news that Mr. Derwent had stood for some time on the top of Castle Hill, as though watching for something, and that he now lay down at the foot of the hill, to all appearance asleep.

‘Go and sup with all speed at the *Woolpack*,’ said Henry Brownrigg, ‘and be back here in half an hour. Our bogle-hunt must begin.’

CHAPTER XXVII

WHEN Michael awoke it was quite dusk. The sleep had greatly refreshed him, and, as he strode across the fields to Stable Hills Farm, his spirits rose and he felt eager for the night's adventure. Keeping a little to the south of the boathouse, he waited in the place that had been agreed upon until he saw, in the fast-deepening gloom, the light in the window above the great door, extinguished. It had been kindled in the Lord's Island house early in the evening as a sign that all was well and that Audrey would come as arranged, and now that it was out, he knew that she must be getting into the boat, and that in a few minutes she would be with him. His heart throbbed fast when, out of the gloom, he saw the outline of the dark hull approaching, and heard the sound of her muffled oars close by. In another moment she was at the shore, and, leaping into the boat, he pushed off again, taking the second pair of oars that had been provided and giving her a whispered greeting.

'The other boat is all right?' she inquired.

'Yes, safely moored near Portinscale, and stowed away in it I have put some old clothes that Dickon was keeping for a scarecrow, and a ragged smock which would make any king look like a clown.'

Audrey laughed beneath her breath, and they rowed steadily on, taking care to give the mill of Lowdore as wide a berth as might be, lest Mounsey should descry them.

Now, to find the entrance to the Derwent at the south end of Derwentwater is no easy matter even by daylight, for the marshy ground, with its wilderness of reeds, its narrow channels, which often prove mere *culs-de-sac*, and its absence of landmarks, is bewildering. But by night the task is hard indeed, and, well as Michael knew the country, he was sorely baffled in the midnight gloom. At last, however, they struck the right channel, and, after that, every bend being familiar to them both, they got on easily enough, mooring the boat on the opposite side of the river to Manesty meads, and then setting off across the wet grass towards the entrance to the Happy Valley.

The night was clear and the stars were shining brightly, so that they could plainly distinguish the outlines of the craggy hills which surrounded it, and, guided by the stream, they walked on swiftly, Audrey springing lightly over the boggy ground in the raiment of the ghost and thankful not to have heavy skirts trailing after her in the darkness.

‘Ah, Mic!’ she exclaimed, as he helped her over a bit of ground that had become a swamp since the heavy rain, ‘two is better than one. I should have been in a panic of terror many a time this night had it not been for you.’

‘Thank God I am here, then!’ said Michael. ‘It makes me shudder even now to think how nearly Matt Birkett caught you the other night.’

‘Ah! and it was not only of human beings I was in terror,’ said Audrey; ‘I kept on thinking how it would be if the mock bogle and the real bogle were to come face to face.’

He laughed softly at this idea, and then they both started violently, for a screech-owl flew past them with its melancholy, foreboding cry.

‘Well, if we meet nothing more dangerous than

screech-owls and bogles we shall carry through our night's work easily enough,' said Michael, cheerfully. 'Don't you think you might give the call now?'

They paused by the stream, while her clear, yet soft cry sounded out into the night, and was echoed by John Radcliffe in his shelter under the old yew tree. He came striding down the hill, and, leaping the stream, gave them an eager greeting.

'Is all well?' he inquired.

'Yes, your boat awaits you,' they replied.

'That's good hearing,' he said cheerfully. 'I should have rotted had I been mowed up under that old tree any longer. Talk about King Charles in the oak, he was lapped in luxury compared with me! And, when at last the deluge ended, I didn't dare come out of that apology for an ark, since a boy saw fit to feed his flock of sheep at the other end of the valley. Well, little ghost, how many rustics have you scared on the way here?'

'We have not seen a soul,' said Audrey, blithely. 'Here, sir, is a packet of money which my grandfather sends you with his best wishes for your safe journeying to France.'

'That's good of him,' said John Radcliffe. 'Mr. Derwent, did you remember the disguise?'

'Yes, sir,' said Michael; 'I have robbed a scarecrow in your behalf.'

This greatly tickled the Jacobite's fancy, and they had some difficulty in making him hush his laughter as they came down once more to the winding river and got into the boat.

'Give me the oars,' he said, 'and Audrey, do you steer. I shall be glad to stretch my limbs once more.'

And then silence fell on the party, while swiftly, with the current in their favour, they rowed down to the reedy entrance to Derwentwater and out on to the broad expanse. So still was the night that Audrey could see

the stars reflected in the water as in a mirror, while the gloomy heights of Maiden-moor and Catbells loomed darkly upon the western shore. The only sign that any other human beings besides themselves existed in the neighbourhood lay in the twinkling rushlight in the children's room on St. Herbert's Isle and the light in her grandfather's bedchamber on Lord's Island.

The two men had kept on their dark coats for fear their white shirt-sleeves should betray them to any chance watcher, but Michael, heated with rowing, had thrown off his hat, so that the night breeze gently blew back the long, dark hair of his peruke. She fancied that his face gleamed curiously white in the dim starlight, and once, when a sudden flicker of summer lightning illuminated everything for a minute, she saw that there were lines of pain round his lips and in his eyes a look which made her think of the eyes of a wounded stag she had once seen in Borrowdale. That was years ago, when Michael had first gone to Cambridge, and she remembered that it was her lover who had been out deer-stalking and that the wounded stag had fallen a victim to his gun. She shivered a little. Was it because the parting was so near at hand that he bore that look?

There was another quiver of sheet-lightning; this time he stopped rowing for a minute, glanced round to see the opening to the Derwent, and whispered to her to steer to the left. Against the dancing light Skiddaw and Latrigg rose majestically, while below, in silvery brightness, the Greta flowed into the Derwent, and all the reeds and rushes along the banks shimmered and sparkled like the spears of a great army.

‘The current is strong; keep well to the left, close to the rushes,’ said Michael. ‘Now we are almost there; I moored her to that willow round the next bend. Ship your oars, sir,’ he added, glancing back at the Jacobite.

John Radcliffe silently obeyed. Audrey, with both hands on the tiller, kept her eyes fixed on the willow tree, and already they had caught sight of the moored boat, when suddenly there was a blaze of light from a lantern held by someone half hidden by the reeds; strong hands clutched their boat and made it fast, while, with an effort which nearly capsized them, John Radcliffe was dragged ashore by three men, who flung themselves upon him. The bearer of the lantern stepped forward and touched him on the shoulder.

‘In the King’s name!’ he said, and Audrey, shrinking down into her place in the stern, knew that it was her lover.

She felt a hand on hers and, lifting her face, saw Michael stooping over her.

‘Quick,’ he whispered, almost lifting her onto the seat he had quitted. ‘Take the oars and row home. I’ll cut the rope while they are getting me ashore.’

She was like one stunned, and it was only under his compulsion that she obeyed, while he, with ears sharpened by anxiety, was listening to the confused babel of voices.

‘There be two other gentlemen in the boat, sir,’ cried Birkett. ‘Be us to mak’ ’em all prisoner?’

Henry Brownrigg turned, having been too much occupied in seeing the constable bind John Radcliffe’s arms to his sides to heed anything else.

‘To be sure, Birkett,’ he said. ‘So, Mr. Derwent, you have changed your views! Drag him out, men. What’s the good of resisting, gentlemen; we are five of us here and are bound to take you?’

As he spoke he hung the lantern on a branch of the willow and stepped closer to the boat, from the bows of which Michael was struggling with his would-be captors on the bank.

He had unsheathed his knife and was desperately

sawing at the cord with which the men had secured the prow. Birkett, only, divined what he was about, and gripped his arm like a vise, whereupon Michael shifted his knife to the other hand, gave the fellow a touch with the point, which made him start back for a moment, and then in triumph severed the rope.

‘Pull off!’ he cried to Audrey, and at the same moment he took his assailants utterly by surprise by yielding and leaping on shore so suddenly that he sent three of them sprawling onto the ground.

But Henry Brownrigg was not to be so easily baffled; he gripped fast hold of the boat before the rower had had time to get fairly off.

‘Hold there!’ he cried. ‘You don’t escape us now, my man! Get up, you fellows, and make that other gentleman prisoner.’

He broke off, for Michael put a hand on his shoulder and said in a tone which could not reach the others:

‘Sir, do you not see that it is Mr. Radcliffe’s niece in disguise? For God’s sake, nay, for her sake and your own, let her row home and say no more.’

For a minute the Under-Sheriff was struck dumb; then a look of fury crossed his face; he ground his teeth with rage.

‘Youdale and Birkett, come and bind this villain before he does any more mischief,’ he exclaimed, and the men stepped forward, glad enough to pinion one who had given them so much trouble.

‘Tighter!’ cried the Under-Sheriff, pleased to see his enemy wince a little as the cord cut into his wrists.

Just then there came a sound like a stifled sob from the river.

‘Henry, he only came to protect me!’ cried Audrey, pleadingly, and at the piteous, girlish voice the constable and his helpers started in amaze and stared stupidly at the figure in the boat.

‘Oh, I understand it all now, madam; you needn’t explain,’ said Henry Brownrigg, scathingly. ‘My good men, this lady was to have been wedded to me next month, but she prefers masquerading at midnight in men’s attire. Be good enough to help her from the boat. ’Tis a pity that the spectators are not more numerous and that our theatre is indifferently lighted,’ and with a coarse jest he turned mercilessly towards the shrinking figure of his *fiancée*.

All this time Michael had stood by in silence, maddened by the sense of his helplessness, but that last ribald speech was too much for his powers of endurance. With a dexterous movement of the head, he suddenly jerked the lantern off the branch of the willow, and then, before the Under-Sheriff or his men could rescue it from the ground, gave it a kick which sent it spinning through the air, to splash into the middle of the river and sink to the bottom.

The men were just dragging Audrey ashore, when the little group found themselves in sudden darkness. John Radcliffe laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. But the Under-Sheriff, understanding the chivalrous thought of his rival, only hated him the more, and, with a savage determination not to be balked, called upon Youdale to get out the tinder-box.

‘There is a gorse-bush a few paces off; set it alight,’ he said, peremptorily, and the men obeyed, while the others brought the three prisoners forward, not a little curious to see more plainly how the plotters would look.

In truth it was a strange scene; it appealed even to such a case-hardened man of the world as John Radcliffe. There they stood, with the dark outline of Causey Pike and Rowling End showing out clearly for background, while every now and then the Newlands Valley would be bathed in the dazzling radiance of the

summer lightning. The flaming gorse-bush cast a strong light upon Michael and Audrey, but, whereas in the boat she had been merely a terrified girl, she had now suddenly developed into a woman, and stood there with a patient dignity which partly hid the bitter pain she was suffering. John Radcliffe saw that Michael was less successful in concealing the indignation that raged within him, and strange thoughts passed through the elder man's mind as he watched that curiously familiar face with its Welsh outlines, its reproachful hazel eyes. As for the north-countrymen, they looked uncomfortable and ill at ease, while the Under-Sheriff, his tall, portly figure and handsome features showing to great advantage in the lurid light, might have stood for an impersonation of Milton's Archfiend, so full of pride and malice did he appear.

'Did you know that there was a warrant out against Mr. John Radcliffe?' he demanded of Michael.

'Yes, I learnt it yesterday.'

'How?'

'It was casually mentioned in a letter I had from London.'

'Did the letter say that Mr. Radcliffe was in this part of the country?'

'No, I learnt that later on.'

'Who from?'

'I was out mothing that night, as Mounsey and Birkett will have told you; later on I came across the Borrowdale Bogle, and discovered that it was Mistress Radcliffe carrying food to her uncle.'

Henry Brownrigg turned upon Audrey at that, speaking in the clear, cutting tone which in itself seems an insult.

'I begin to understand, madam,' he said. 'You have deceived me for several days past, and, not content with that, you elected to spend last night in the company of

the Borrowdale bastard, though knowing quite well that he is my hated rival, a man I——'

He broke off, for John Radcliffe had stepped forward.

'Sir,' said the Jacobite, in a cool, mocking voice, 'it really distresses me to see you labouring so unnecessarily under a mistake. Also I must insist on your withdrawing the epithet you used. Michael is my son by my first marriage, and you will hardly say that he was doing an outrageous thing in protecting his cousin, Mistress Radcliffe, in her walk to my hiding-place.'

If a thunderbolt had fallen at their feet the little group could hardly have been more startled; as for Michael, he stood like a man in a dream. Could it really be that at last he had found the truth he had so long sought? And was this Jacobite, to whom from the very first he had felt drawn, the father he had learnt to detest for the wrong done him as an infant and for the way in which his mother had been treated? Then he remembered how the tardy acknowledgement had been made to save Audrey's reputation, and he thought no more of past wrongs, but only of present gratitude.

He crossed over towards Henry Brownrigg, who stood petrified with astonishment, his face dark with conflicting emotions. 'Mr. Brownrigg,' said Michael, 'I am ready of course to take the responsibility of having helped my father to escape, but now that you understand all, let your betrothed row back to Lord's Island.'

'Ha! betrothed did you say?' said the Under-Sheriff, with a mocking laugh. 'Nay, I call you all to witness that I return my troth to this audacious masquerader. The doublet and hose are doubtless very becoming, but for my future wife I prefer the petticoat. If Mistress Radcliffe apes the ways of men she must be treated as a man. You, sir, will, I understand, be heir to the

estate of Goldrill in Patterdale when your Jacobite father is hung, but as things stand you seem likely to spend your days in gaol, so the inheritance will not avail you much. I am under an obligation to you, however, for that estate would have been my sole inducement to overlook the midnight ramblings of our dainty cavalier yonder and still to wed her.'

'You vile coward!' cried Michael, his eyes blazing with anger. 'How dare you insult my cousin? The moment I am free I will call you to account for it.'

Henry bowed ironically.

'I accept your challenge with the greatest pleasure,' he said. 'Now, men, march these Jacobite plotters back to Keswick, and since there is no more cord we must e'en let the Borrowdale Bogle go unbound. Birkett, you have been ghost-stalking since Saturday. I commend her to your keeping. Have a care, man, that she doesn't slip through your fingers.'

Michael glanced for one moment into the face of the woman he loved. Since that appeal to Henry from the boat she had not uttered a word; her old playfellow's pain prompted that stifled cry, but her own suffering seemed to have half-paralysed her. She bore the look of stony despair which one sees at times in the face of the bereaved, for in truth those words which Henry Brownrigg had spoken, that exhibition of merciless, brutal cruelty, had shattered into a thousand fragments the image of her lover which she had so long cherished. The man she had admired—yes, and loved with her whole heart—was absolutely dead; she saw him now as he really was, and the blank desolation of her heart was indescribable.

She longed to lie down and die, but there was the miserable necessity of tramping the weary way to Keswick. By the time they had crossed the dewy fields, however, and had reached the lane leading from Cros-

thwaite Church to the little market town, her steps had begun to falter; it seemed as if she could go no further. Michael, who walked just behind her, lagged a little and spoke beneath his breath to the constable.

‘Greenhow, you are a good-hearted fellow,’ he said. ‘Tell the Under-Sheriff that Mistress Radcliffe is faint; she might rest at Hye Hill. See, they have a light yet burning.’

But the Under-Sheriff was not in a compliant mood.

‘No favouritism,’ he said shortly. ‘She will spend the night in the lock-up; but if she is faint, why, let her rest a minute in the porch yonder. I see the Quaker has a bench on each side.’

By this time Audrey felt as if her last hour had come; each time Henry spoke a quiver of pain shot through her heart; it was as though the ghost of dead love was trying to struggle back to life. Blind, giddy, gasping for breath, she let the constable put her down on the bench, while, for a moment, she must have drifted quite away into unconsciousness. When she came to herself, she found that someone had opened the door of the house and that light was streaming upon the little group in the porch; she could see that Michael, his arms still bound with cruel tightness to his sides, stepped eagerly forward.

‘Sir,’ he said, ‘I claim your help for our kinswoman, Audrey Radcliffe; she is faint with fatigue.’

The old Quaker, ignoring the cavalier costume, perhaps scarcely noticing it, came quickly towards the prostrate figure and laid his hand on the long, shining curls that half hid the face.

‘Friend Audrey,’ he said, ‘welcome to my house! Come in and rest.’

‘Nay, Mr. Quaker,’ said Henry Brownrigg, with a harsh laugh, ‘your fair kinswoman must lie to-night in the lock-up. She hath mixed herself up with a

treasonable Popish plot that even you would not approve of.'

Audrey caught at her old kinsman's hand, gripping it much as Michael had done in that paroxysm of pain when he had first met him. The old Quaker knew very well what such an act meant, for in his time he had comforted many.

'There is no disgrace in a gaol, Audrey,' he said quietly. 'Yet I am right glad to see thee ere thou dost go to it. Wait awhile, for my wife is suffering from the ague, and I have on the fire a posset keeping hot for her. Thou shalt drink some of it, and it will hearten thee for the rest of thy walk.'

His tone soothed her, and it was perhaps quite as much the kindly tenderness of his manner as the virtues of the sack posset which restored her strength. Her blank, desolate world, which had been wrecked by Henry Brownrigg, began to put forth little shoots of life. Did not this old kinsman, though so little known to her, treat her with the loving thoughtfulness of a father? Into her frozen heart there stole a gratitude which she could never have put into words. And she grew strong to face the hard future as she remembered how, at the worst, her own kinsfolk had stood by her—how indeed their one thought had been to shelter and spare her.

In a few minutes they had looked their last on the old Quaker and were marching on into Keswick, but the thought of that peaceful face, with its quiet, kindly eyes, lingered with Michael and Audrey like a good angel. How he had suffered in the past! and how well he must have suffered to come through it all with such a look!

And so it came about that Henry Brownrigg, who had expected passionate protestations and entreaties that at least Audrey might be spared the ignominy of

spending the night in the lock-up, was entirely baulked, for the three prisoners calmly allowed themselves to be led in by Birkett and Greenhow, nor did they address a single word to him. He walked away to his quarters at the *Royal Oak* in high dudgeon.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WHEN Greenhow had lighted his lantern the prisoners saw that the lock-up was a bare, flagged place about nine feet square. It had been cleaned out on Monday, after the removal of a refractory prisoner to Cocker-mouth, and it seemed to be absolutely without furniture. The constable, however, said he would fetch some straw, and speedily returned with a big bundle of it under one arm and a pitcher of water in the other.

‘Can’t you take off these cords?’ said John Radcliffe.

‘I dursn’t do it, sir,’ said Greenhow. ‘The Under-Sheriff says they are to be left till you’ve been before the magistrate in the morning.’

However, the fellow did what he could to make their imprisonment tolerable to them, and finally left them with a friendly ‘Good-night,’ locking and bolting the door after him, and retreating to his own home with echoing steps down the silent street.

There was an unglazed window high up in the north wall, and between the iron bars the faint, grey light of early dawn was beginning to steal. A clock in Sir Joseph Banks’ house just opposite struck two.

‘Mic,’ said Audrey, ‘let me bathe your wrists for you; they are all bleeding.’

‘Yes, that’s a happy thought,’ said John Radcliffe. ‘Those brutes have cut into the flesh.’

To tell the truth, Michael would have endured much severer pain for the bliss of feeling those soft, womanly

hands tending him. He was startled, however, when Audrey gave a sad little laugh.

‘Why, how foolish I am!’ she said, beginning quietly to undo the tight knots. ‘I will set you free and have the cords on again before Greenhow comes in the morning.’

Then Uncle Radcliffe chuckled softly to himself, like a man well pleased.

‘Did I not tell you that you had the best wits of us all?’ he said. ‘I’m hanged if the thought of your unloosing us ever crossed my mind.’

Before long she had freed them both. Michael then began to heap the straw together for her in the further corner and to spread his coat for her.

‘You will rest, cousin,’ he said, gently drawing her towards the bed he had prepared. ‘As for me, there is much that I would fain talk over with my father.’

And stooping to kiss her hand, with a reverence which went straight to the heart Henry Brownrigg had outraged, he turned away.

As for Audrey, with her face turned to the wall and her cousin’s coat wrapped about her, she for the first time broke down utterly, and, lying there in the semi-darkness, wept till she could weep no more.

Meanwhile the two men sat at the further end of the cell deep in conversation.

‘Many a time in London,’ said John Radcliffe, ‘I was minded to own you, for, from the first day I met you at Whitehall, I liked you, boy. But then there was the accursed difference in our religion and our politics. I did my utmost to bring you round to the true church and to make a Jacobite of you, but it was of no use. Then, too, you were thirsting for revenge and were doing your utmost to find out your unknown father; I thought there would be difficulties and put off the con-

fession, but I always intended to acknowledge you sooner or later.'

'Why did you desert my mother?' asked Michael, his eyes lighting up angrily.

'I never did desert her,' said John Radcliffe. 'You might justly reproach me with having abandoned you to your fate, but your mother I never did desert.'

'They told me at Watendlath that you left her in the time of her greatest need.'

'Nothing of the sort,' said John Radcliffe. 'I was obliged to go on to Lord's Island, and it was impossible to take her with me, since no one knew of the marriage. We had come over from Patterdale, where I had been to look after the Goldrill estate for Sir Nicholas. Knowing that Watendlath was a quiet place where I could safely leave her, I rode on to Derwentwater, and not long after my arrival my nephew Marmaduke's posthumous child was born and proved to be a girl. Then I knew that I was next heir to the Goldrill estate. As soon as was possible I went with young Vane to Watendlath to ask how matters were with my wife. What happened you know. She was already dead. Had she lived, your life might have been very different. But she was gone, leaving me only a puny babe, whose existence bid fair to thwart all my plans.'

'What plans?' said Michael.

'The lady I shortly afterwards married,' said John Radcliffe, 'had always coveted the Goldrill estate. I knew that she would accept my suit now that I was heir, but it was out of the question that I should confess my secret marriage with your mother and tell the Lady Isabella that no child of hers could inherit the estate. In order to make my marriage with this lady possible—she had great influence at court, and would, I thought, ensure my success in life—I made up my mind to drown you. But when it came to the point, and I was going

to cast you into the Derwent, I couldn't do it. So I just left you there on the bank, hoping that someone would take pity on you. 'Twas a dastardly thing to do, and Father Noel has for years tried to make me acknowledge you, but somehow the right time never came, and it grew harder as the years went on. I hope you won't bear malice.'

There was a silence in the cell.

'Why don't you speak, Michael?' urged his father, trying in vain in the dim light to read his son's face. 'I have gained nothing by all these schemes, and now, as likely as not, shall be sent to the gallows. Come, say you forgive me.'

But Michael thought of the horrible slur on his birth, under which his whole life had been past. And to forgive was hard. Nor was his father's easy-going, selfish nature one that called out the better side of those who had to do with him. In the dead silence of the lock-up there was no sound to be heard but Audrey's regular breathing, for at last she slept.

Presently she gave a little sob in her sleep, and Michael remembered how bitterly she had suffered that night. He turned back to his father.

'I forgive you, sir,' he said quietly, 'because to-night you acknowledged me in time to shield Audrey. I forgive you gladly, for you have baulked the Under-Sheriff.'

'If only the maid could realise it, she is well quit of that great, hectoring bully,' said John Radcliffe. 'By the powers! if you and I had not been bound he should not have escaped scot-free; we would have ducked him in the river and cooled his ribald tongue. We would have sent him spinning through the air after his lantern. Well, the marriage will never come off now, for it was the estate he hankered after, and that will be yours. By the bye, he will owe you a double grudge,

and will doubtless do his best to keep you in gaol. But I scarcely think Audrey would have him after his conduct to-night, even if he did succeed in getting us both out of the world.'

'He will hardly be able to manage that,' said Michael.

'Not in your case, unless he distorts things very greatly. But I suspect 'twill be a hanging matter for me,' said John Radcliffe coolly. 'You must tell Father Noel that I have acknowledged you, and the best solution of the difficulty would be for you to wed Audrey.'

The hot blood rushed to Michael's face.

'She does not care for me,' he said in a low voice. 'She loved the Under-Sheriff.'

'Very possibly,' said John Radcliffe. 'That is to say she loved his fine person, and the pretty picture of the man's noble character which she drew in her own mind. That picture is gone now, and in its place there remains only the grim reality of a low-minded, coarse, brutal tyrant, who taunted and insulted her. He has no one but himself to thank; he deliberately killed her love for him. Depend upon it, the time will come when she will learn to care for the fellow who kicked the lantern into the river.'

And it was then that there flashed back into Michael's mind the words that Zinogle had spoken only a few hours before about hope.

When Audrey woke, the sun had long ago risen and she could hear voices in the little Market Square. She looked round in a bewildered way, puzzled for a moment not to see the wainscotted walls of her bedroom and the picture of her mother, generally the first thing upon which her eyes rested upon waking. Instead, the light was streaming through heavy iron bars, and at the other side of the room sat Uncle Radcliffe with his back against the wall and his mouth wide open, snoring

loudly, while, stretched uneasily upon the flagstones, Michael lay, with his head pillowed on his arm, fast asleep.

Then it all came back to her again, and with a moan of pain she hid her face from the light. After all she had endured the last few days, all the anxiety and suspense, the misery of a divided duty, here was her great-uncle in prison and in danger of his life, while her own life had been utterly wrecked, and the lover she had fondly deemed a tower of strength had proved a mere broken reed. Thinking over it all, she remembered now his strange manner to Michael when, in the previous autumn, he had found them looking together at Lucy Carleton's book. She remembered, too, how a faint misgiving had stirred in her mind when he came to Lord's Island a week ago and asked if they had visitors. It was only too clear now that she and her mother had been utterly deceived in him, and that the men, who one and all seemed to disapprove of the proposed marriage, had been right. Well, he had gone for ever out of her life—the man to whom she had for more than a year been betrothed might be said never to have had any real existence. It was there that the sting lay.

Suddenly she remembered that Greenhow would be returning ere long to attend to his prisoners, and she started up and stole across to rouse her uncle.

‘Let me bind your arms, sir,’ she said, ‘before Greenhow comes, or you may get into trouble.’

‘True,’ said John Radcliffe, yawning and rubbing his eyes as he stood up. ‘I see my son sleeps still. Hark you, Audrey, I am sorry enough to have exposed you to so much suffering and insult at the hands of Mr. Brownrigg, but believe me, niece, you will one day thank me for opening your eyes. It may be that I shall not see you again alone; the feeling in the country is sure to run very strongly for a time against all Jacobites, and

I don't expect to cheat the gallows. Later on, when you have had time to recover the shock of last night, try to remember that my son has loved you all his life. I have dealt hardly by him, God knows! Try to do what you may to make the rest of his life more endurable.'

Audrey dropped her head, and her eyes swam with tears.

'Alas!' she said, 'but that is not in my power, sir. I think my heart is dead.'

Nothing more could be said by John Radcliffe, for Michael just then began to stir, and indeed it was well that he woke, for he had scarcely donned his coat and allowed Audrey to bind his arms again when Greenhow appeared. The fellow brought them bread and another pitcher of water, and told them that he had orders to take them in a couple of hours' time to the house of Squire Williamson, the magistrate, at which news Audrey's cheeks began to burn and tingle. Turning aside, she made the best preparations she could for feeding her fellow-prisoners, while her great-uncle, with that curious ability to take all things in the lightest fashion, did his utmost to make the meal a merry one. His companions were in prison solely through his fault, but this never seemed to distress him; on the contrary, with the perception of the desperate plight they were all in, his spirits actually rose, and, with death staring him in the face, he was more than ever determined to extract the last grain of enjoyment from life.

Michael partly understood how it was with him, and could not but admire his courage, but, as a matter of fact, the examination before the magistrate did not appear in the least formidable to a man of the world and a stranger, while to Michael and Audrey it meant the adverse criticism and the merciless gaze of the people they had known from their childhood. When Green-

how came for them Audrey's face was of a marble whiteness.

'Courage, little Joan of Arc,' said John Radcliffe. 'I'll warrant you are tenfold more brave and pure than those who will cry shame on you.'

So they walked out of the cell and left the quaint, wooden Town Hall and stepped out into the little Market Square, where quite a crowd of people were awaiting them, since Keswick and the neighbourhood had been greatly excited by the news of the arrest. For himself, Michael could have faced the ordeal calmly enough, but thinking of Audrey, his face flushed and his eyes grew bright. Alas! bound as he was, he could do nothing save walk by her side. At her right hand were John Radcliffe and the constable, while Birkett kept to Michael's left, elbowing a way for them through the gaping crowd. He could only hope that she did not hear the comments of the people. Yet he feared she did, for her head drooped lower, so that her sunny curls half veiled her face, and once he was sure that her steps faltered.

But suddenly her whole bearing changed, for, with a fierce cry of 'Death to the Papist!' a burly fellow flung a handful of mud right into John Radcliffe's face, and stones would have followed had not the constable sternly called the fellow to order.

Then Audrey, who a moment before had been like one crushed beneath an intolerable burden, seemed all at once to gain new life. She stopped the little procession, Greenhow not venturing to object, and there, before all the people, she drew out her handkerchief and wiped the mud from her uncle's face. The man who had flung it slunk away ashamed, and the crowd watched in absolute silence, nor did Michael hear another word of abuse all the way to Squire Williamson's house.

They were taken into the hall, where, early though it was, quite a number of people had gathered. The Under-Sheriff was there and the other men who had been present at the time of the arrest, and Mrs. Brownrigg, very stiff and stately, with a grim expression about her mouth and a stony stare for the girl who was to have been her daughter-in-law. There, too, was Nathaniel Radcliffe with his calm face and gentle eyes, besides many others of the gentry of the neighbourhood, Williamsons and Huttons, distant Radcliffe kinsfolk, Fletchers from Wythop, and Le Flemings from Monks-hall.

Someone offered Audrey a chair, but she declined it, choosing to stand with her uncle and Michael at the table before which Squire Williamson sat with papers and an inkhorn in front of him. All three prisoners pleaded guilty: John Radcliffe to a charge of conspiring to bring about the return of King James, and Michael and Audrey to the charge of endeavouring to aid the escape of John Radcliffe, knowing that a warrant was out for his arrest. The Jacobite's case was quickly disposed of; there was no possible choice but to commit him for trial, and Squire Williamson gave orders that he should be conveyed to Cockermouth on the following Monday.

He next turned to Michael.

‘I am sorry you are mixed up in an affair of this sort, Mr. Derwent,’ he remarked, not unkindly. ‘It is an ill beginning, and one that will little please your patron, Sir Wilfrid Lawson.’

‘Sir,’ said Michael, ‘my life has been curiously changed by Mr. John Radcliffe's visit to the north. It seems that I also am a Radcliffe—his son by his first marriage.’

Now, Henry Brownrigg had not seen fit to make this public as yet, and had bidden his men to hold their

tongues, so that when the Borrowdale foundling quietly announced his parentage there was much excitement in the hall.

John Radcliffe scanned the faces of the people carefully, then turned to Squire Williamson.

‘It is perfectly true, sir, and the matter was owned by me many years ago to Father Noel in confession. He has long urged me to acknowledge my son, but, on my return from France, finding him to be a Protestant and an Orangeite, I put it off, and Father Noel could not speak, as he knew the matter only under the seal of the confessional. I think you will admit, Squire, that it is not a great crime for a son to aid his father’s escape.’

But at this Michael started forward.

‘Sir, let us keep to the truth,’ he said, colouring. ‘I did not do it for your sake, but solely to help the kinsman of Sir Nicholas and Mistress Audrey Radcliffe. They have been good to me all my life.’

There was something frank and spontaneous in this speech that appealed to those present; moreover, John Radcliffe’s confession that he would have owned his son before had he not been a Protestant and an anti-Jacobite evoked a good deal of feeling in Michael’s favour.

‘When did you know that Mr. John Radcliffe was in the neighbourhood?’ asked Squire Williamson.

‘The night before last, sir,’ said Michael, ‘when, as I was out catching moths for a collection now being made by Sir William Denham of the Royal Society and Dr. Martin Lister, I happened to catch sight of the Borrowdale Bogle, and, wishing to learn what the phantom really was, stood my ground and laid hold upon it. I then discovered that it was Mistress Radcliffe carrying food to her great-uncle, who lay hidden in the woods. It was impossible to let her go alone all that way in the dead of night, knowing, as I did, that the Under-Sheriff’s men were at no great distance. I went with

her and saw her home to Lord's Island, and it was arranged that the next evening I should provide a boat, in which Mr. Radcliffe might escape to the further end of Bassenthwaite and thence go across country to the sea-coast, for he gave us his word that he would quit England and weave no more plots. How the Under-Sheriff dogged my steps and kept watch for us on the banks of the Derwent you have heard from his own lips. I have nothing more to say, sir.'

'I am sorry it falls to my lot to commit you for trial,' said Squire Williamson, 'but I'll not send you to Cockermouth prison if you are prepared to offer bail.'

Then the old Quaker stepped forward and offered to find the necessary money.

'Long ago, when he was but a little lad, Michael Derwent did me a service when I was haled to Cockermouth gaol,' he said, in his mild, quiet voice. ''Tis a happiness to me to claim him as my kinsman and to offer him what help I may.'

There now only remained Audrey's case to be disposed of, and Squire Williamson looked uneasily across the table at the slight figure in its cavalier dress, and at the pale, suffering, yet dignified, face of the girl. He was a kind-hearted man, with daughters of his own, and he remembered how only a few months before he had seen Audrey standing with something of the same look beside the open vault in Crosthwaite Church, into which her mother's coffin had just been lowered. It was a strange thing in those days for a woman to attend a funeral, but Audrey had been present because she was the only near relative belonging to the Church of England, and all the spectators had been forced to realise how desolate the girl's position would be, left alone with those whose views were opposed to her own. They had said then that it was well she was betrothed to Henry Brownrigg, but that betrothal was now at an

end, for the Under-Sheriff had said so, and indeed people thought he was well out of the affair now that the maid had ventured to play so dangerous a part. Still the squire could not feel harshly towards her.

‘Tell me, Mistress Audrey,’ he said, ‘was it of your own choice that you learnt of your great-uncle’s arrival?’

‘No, sir,’ she said, in a low, clear voice, ‘we none of us had any choice in the matter. He just came into the room where I was sitting with my grandfather and Mr. Noel late one evening and told us that he had fled from London because he had been involved in a plot against their Majesties. He pleaded for shelter, and since it seemed impossible to have him in the house so often visited by Mr. Brownrigg, it was thought best that he should shelter among the fells. I was the only able-bodied one in the house, and went with him to show him a hiding-place, and again on the Wednesday night I went to take him more food. The rest you know from my cousin’s account.’

‘Yet you are still faithful to the Church of England, and a loyal subject of King William and Queen Mary?’

‘Yes, sir,’ said Audrey. ‘I saw nothing against my duty towards church or state in carrying bread and meat to my kinsman, or in steering the boat last night when we hoped he would have been able to quit the country.’

‘Lady Alice Lisle was burnt for a similar offence by King James,’ said the squire, ‘but, thank God, since our peaceful revolution, times are changed, and Parliament has reversed this cruel sentence. Since you assure me, Mistress Radcliffe, that you only did this carrying of food and this aiding and abetting the escape of your great-uncle out of the natural affection of a niece, I shall discharge you, and consider that you have already suffered enough and paid the penalty of what we can only call a rash deed.’

The old magistrate had certainly the sympathy of almost all present, and Audrey received many kindly words when, after taking leave of her uncle, Nathaniel Radcliffe escorted her to the door. But, to tell the truth, she was too much dazed to heed them, and was chiefly conscious of Henry's air of studied indifference and of his mother's shrewish words:

‘For my part, I think you have fared far better than you deserve, Mistress Radcliffe,’ she said, with a chilling farewell curtsy. ‘My only satisfaction is in feeling that we learnt in time how much we had been mistaken in you.’

Audrey's head drooped low, and burning tears rushed to her eyes; she clung closer to the old Quaker's arm, and wondered what made him glance back with anxiety in his face to the spot where Henry Brownrigg and Michael stood exchanging a few last words.

‘Your messenger will find me at the *Royal Oak*,’ she heard Henry say. But, worn out and utterly exhausted by all she had gone through, it never occurred to her to think that the words referred to the challenge of the previous night.

CHAPTER XXIX

NATHANIEL RADCLIFFE, though he had not heard the challenge given on the banks of the Derwent, instantly guessed that a duel between the Under-Sheriff and his rival must be imminent. The idea that he had himself procured Michael's release on bail, and that the young man was now going out in hot blood to fight his enemy, disturbed the Quaker not a little. He knew well enough that his young kinsman was in no humour to brook interference, nor did he venture to question him, but went home in some perplexity after seeing Audrey as far as Stable Hills Farm. All that day he waited for what he called 'a leading,' but nothing came, and at length the old man went to bed and slept soundly, tired with his disturbed night and the unexpected events of the day. He woke very early and went, as his custom was, into the little room over the porch to pray and meditate. Moving after a while to open his casement and let in the fresh morning air, he was startled to see passing along the road just below the window no less a person than the Under-Sheriff, and with him young Fletcher of Wythop. 'There is mischief afoot,' he thought, and, going downstairs, he put on his three-cornered hat and followed the two men, whose appearance at such an early hour evidently boded no good.

But the Quaker was old and infirm and the young men were walking quickly; to overtake them was impossible; he could only hurry on, taking care not to lose

sight of them. Presently they turned into a field on the left, and Nathaniel Radcliffe, toiling after them, was quite prepared for the sight that greeted him. The Under-Sheriff was throwing off his coat and waistcoat; Michael, already in his shirt-sleeves, was examining his rapier, and the seconds—young Fletcher of Wythop and a son of Squire Williamson's, who had been at the High School with Michael—were measuring out the ground.

There was a general exclamation when they became aware that the Quaker was approaching them. Duelling, though constantly practised, had long been against the law, and Nathaniel Radcliffe, who disapproved of fighting altogether, and if struck on the face would have turned the other cheek, had evidently come to enter a protest.

'Friend,' he said quietly, 'more than once before I persuaded thee against fighting; listen to me now, and do not stain thy soul with this crime. Who is the challenger?'

'I am the challenger,' said Michael, hotly, 'and this time, sir, it is needful that we fight.'

'What is the quarrel?' said the Quaker.

'The Under-Sheriff has brutally and wantonly insulted our kinswoman, Audrey Radcliffe.'

'And once before, friend, he slandered thy mother; thou wouldst fain have fought him then, and like enough if thou hadst done so thy mother's name would never have been freed from blame as yesterday was the case.'

'Sir,' said Michael, chafing terribly at the interruption, 'it is an affair of honour. I must fight. For our cousin's sake I am bound to fight Mr. Brownrigg.'

'It will not profit Audrey Radcliffe that thou, for her sake, dost break Christ's command. The day is not so

far off as men dream when duelling and war will be looked on as brutalities of a bygone time, when the beast in man was scarce tamed.'

'But that time has not yet come,' pleaded Michael, 'and now to cry off would be accounted dishonourable.'

'Who would account it dishonourable?'

'Why, all the world,' said Michael, keenly sensitive to the derisive air with which the Under-Sheriff was regarding them.

'The world!' said the Quaker, a flicker of amusement passing over his peaceful face. 'Oh, that may very well be. But thou hast promised to renounce the world. Art so little of a gentleman as to break thy word to the King of Kings because, forsooth, an Under-Sheriff hath offended thee and thy kinswoman?'

Michael bit his lip. It was clearly impossible to argue with a man who took this position. He wondered if Nathaniel Radcliffe in the least understood with what a desperate desire he longed to fight his foe. Merely to look at Henry Brownrigg's sneering face made the blood tingle in his veins and stirred in him that craving to fight which seems born in every human being.

'Friend,' said the Quaker, 'there is fighting enough before thee, but 'tis of a nobler sort than can be carried on with such a weapon as this. Is John Williamson thy second? Then let him talk with Henry Brownrigg's second and say that thou desirest to withdraw from the contest.'

The Quaker's absolute sincerity always had a curious influence over Michael. It seemed to lift him up into a purer atmosphere, and now, as they stood in the field over which the glow of the sunrise was just beginning to spread, his anger died down. Nicholas Radcliffe was surely right; what would it profit Audrey that the grass and daisies should be dyed with the blood of the man

who had jilted her, or of the man who had loved her in vain?

The seconds came to terms, and Henry Brownrigg was reluctantly forced to relinquish the idea of the duel.

‘If Mistress Radcliffe’s cousin finds that his courage fails at the sight of cold steel, I am ready to forego the fight,’ he said, sarcastically. ‘Of course it is his concern; if he has no objection to being considered a coward, and has no longer any desire to call me to account for the words I used the other night, I certainly am the last man to object.’

The blood rushed to Michael’s face; a storm of passionate indignation shook his whole frame. But, by a supreme effort, he held his peace.

The Quaker understood how great a struggle he was passing through, and, grasping his arm, drew him quietly from the field, saying in his calm way, as he passed the Under-Sheriff:

‘It is a very small thing that he should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment.’

And, though Henry Brownrigg sneered at this and muttered something about the devil quoting Scripture for his purpose, he turned away with a discomfited air and an uneasy consciousness that the Quaker had had the best of it.

‘The canting old hypocrite has got some extraordinary hold over Michael Derwent,’ he reflected, ‘but I’ll catch my man some day without his angel in drab clothing, and methinks he’ll fight fast enough then. I shall not rest in peace till I’ve run him through the body.’

Michael breakfasted at Hye Hill and then rowed back to St. Herbert’s Isle to get through the day’s work with his pupils and to comfort himself by writing a long letter to Mistress Mary Denham. Late in the afternoon he rowed across to Lord’s Island to inquire after

his kinsfolk and to carry his father's message to the old priest.

Father Noel greeted him very warmly and listened eagerly to his account of all that had passed.

'Your father has very little chance of his life,' he said, with a sigh. 'The feeling in the country against the Jacobites is most bitter, and we hear that the French are still masters of the Channel and are ready to devastate the towns on the south coast. I would give much to be able to see Mr. Radcliffe, both as friend and priest, but you must tell him how matters are with me. Is he in low spirits?'

'No,' said Michael, 'but full of gaiety, though I know he expects nothing but death.'

'He is a brave man,' said the priest, 'but utterly reckless and unfit to die. Tell him as soon as I can move I shall visit him at Cockermouth. The trial will not come off yet awhile, and I trust we may meet. Do you see him to-day?'

'Yes, I thought of seeing him this evening,' said Michael, 'and no doubt Sir Nicholas will send him such things as he will need to take with him on Monday when they move him to the gaol at Cockermouth.'

'To be sure,' said the priest. 'By the bye, you had best see Sir Nicholas now, for he talks much of you. He is rejoiced that the Brownrigg marriage will never take place, but nevertheless frets sadly over Audrey's suffering.'

'Can I see her?' asked Michael.

The priest hesitated. His active, scheming mind was already busy with the future, and he had that very day indited a private letter to Mr. Salkeld, greatly hoping that he might now renew his suit.

'I don't advise your seeing her,' he said, kindly. 'She tries to go about as usual, but 'tis easy to see what a strain it is upon her. No doubt you will meet to-

morrow, unless indeed she cannot face the ordeal of going to service at Crosthwaite and being stared at by the people. Well, you will see Sir Nicholas, so farewell, my boy. I am heartily glad that your rights have at last been acknowledged.'

And this was true enough, for Father Noel had the kindest of hearts. Yet, nevertheless, he saw that a great chance offered itself to him of drawing Audrey over to his own church, and his mind began increasingly to dwell upon it. With Protestantism represented by the Under-Sheriff, who had treated her so brutally, surely it would be easy enough to attract her a little later on, when the first sharpness of her grief was over, by such a genial and courteous Catholic as Mr. Salkeld. As for poor Michael, she had never cared for him, and he must console himself with the Goldrill estate. Doubtless, when once she was safely married and had changed her faith, he would get over his hopeless passion and would marry someone else.

'The boy has withstood all Father Sharp's arguments, and we shall never win him as a convert,' reflected the priest regretfully. 'But Audrey's mind is more versatile, more ready to change; with care and patience we ought to win her over.'

CHAPTER XXX

‘LORD love us!’ cried Zinogle, throwing himself back in his chair and laughing till the tears rolled down his face. ‘To think that the parish clerk refused to be godfather to ye long ago, and that I, the Dutch fiddler, as they call me, am godfather to the heir of Goldrill estate! Ah! my boy, ’tis the whirligig of time that brings in his revenges!’

Michael had been telling all that had passed to the old fiddler, and perhaps Zinogle’s intense delight in hearing his news gave him as much pleasure as he had yet received; for, naturally enough, Sir Nicholas, though kind and courteous, had been more than a little pained to think of the shabby way in which his brother had behaved in the past, nor did he like to think that his beloved granddaughter would never succeed to the property, and would be left a dowerless maid at his death.

Sir Nicholas had a mind which moved very slowly and did not readily adapt itself to new circumstances. Grieved as he was to think of the way in which Michael had been wronged, he could not all at once feel him to be of his own blood, and Michael, who was over-sensitive and had a fatal facility in reading people’s thoughts, knew perfectly well that the news which had so changed his whole position came as a blow to the old man on Lord’s Island.

‘There’s a fate against me, Snoggles,’ he said, and though there was a smile on his lips his eyes were all the time sad.

‘I am doomed to be lonely. I have found my father, but he’s on the way to the gallows. I have found my kinsfolk, but they can scarce accord me a welcome, since my advent means their future poverty.’

Zinogle did not reply, but taking up his fiddle, played a grand old chorale which, by its strong confidence, its satisfying simplicity, fairly drove out Michael’s despondent thoughts.

‘What is that?’ he asked eagerly.

‘’Tis Johann Cruger’s *Nun Danket alle Gott*,’ said the fiddler. ‘Keep up your heart, lad; things are working out far better than you expected when last you sat here; and I own ’tis nuts to me to see you checkmate the Under-Sheriff.’

‘I am not so sure that we have done with the Under-Sheriff now,’ said Michael, thoughtfully. ‘He is a man who takes a good deal of beating.’

Taking leave of the old fiddler, he crossed the Market Square to the Town Hall and asked Greenhow to admit him to the lock-up to speak with his father. It was about eight o’clock in the evening and the constable grumbled a little, for he wanted to get home to his supper.

‘’Twill not be so easy to see him at Cockermouth,’ said Michael persuasively. ‘Come, let me have half an hour’s chat with him, Greenhow, and in the meantime go and drink my health as Michael Radcliffe at the *Woolpack*.’

Greenhow, mollified by the silver coin which found its way into his hand, proceeded to unlock the door of the cell, and with a muttered remark that he would be back in half an hour’s time, he left the father and son together and trudged off well content to the inn.

John Radcliffe was supping as comfortably as was possible in such a barely furnished place. He had been

allowed to send out for food and seemed in excellent spirits.

‘I made sure I should have had Father Noel descending upon me,’ he said with a laugh. ‘’Tis just as well that he is tied up by the leg, for to be lectured by him while in the lock-up would be intolerable. Tell him I’ll see him when it’s time to make my shrift before being hung, but not till then.’

‘He would have been here could he have moved,’ said Michael, delivering his old tutor’s message.

‘To be sure, worthy man, but, all the same, I’d liefer see you, my son. Come try this sack; I have tasted worse. “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die” is one of your Bible maxims, is it not?’

‘Why do you take so dark a view, sir? It may be only a matter of imprisonment,’ said Michael, shivering a little at the incongruous thought of death and anything so full of life as the high-spirited, cheery personality of his father.

‘Oh, I’ll do my best to cheat the gallows,’ said John Radcliffe with a laugh, ‘but at present I am not hopeful. That Under-Sheriff will certainly do his utmost to put me out of the way, and as yet I can think of no means of escape. Tell me what you know of Cocker-mouth. What chance should I have of breaking out of gaol there?’

‘What! you mean escape by stratagem?’ said Michael. ‘I was thinking that you might put faith in the well-known tolerance of King William.’

‘Pshaw! I’ll not be dependent on the Oranger’s favour. Besides, curse him! he is a prince, and put not your trust in princes hath ever been a sound axiom. No, I put faith in my own sharp brains and in the slow wits of other folk.’

‘If you mean to try another escape of that sort, why, it had best be done here,’ said Michael, thoughtfully.

Then, a sudden light breaking over his face, he continued breathlessly, 'Why, sir! if you will risk a second attempt we might carry it out to-night. We are of the same height and build; our voices are of the same pitch—nay, Audrey says they are precisely alike. If you change clothes with me, give me your light peruke and don my brown one, no one would note the difference of our features in the gloaming.'

John Radcliffe laughed and rubbed his hands with an almost boyish delight at the suggestion.

'I' faith 'tis excellent!' he cried. 'We'll fool the Under-Sheriff yet. But, boy, it would bring you into trouble; 'tis scarce fair for me to take advantage of your proposal.'

'It will but be a repetition of my offence, sir. Already I have to stand my trial for aiding and abetting your escape. This could make but little difference.'

And, without more ado, Michael began to take off his coat, while his father eagerly discussed the best way in which to get across country to the sea-coast. Fortunately, he still had with him the money which Audrey had given him in the Happy Valley on the Thursday night, so that once out of Keswick he was likely to prosper well enough.

'There is the clock in Sir Joseph Banks' house chiming half-past eight,' said Michael; 'Greenhow will be coming back. Are you ready, sir?'

'Ay, to be sure,' said John Radcliffe; 'whole decades have rolled off my shoulders on to yours. Come! stoop, my worthy father, and try your best to look like a Jacobite conspirator and a man that has knocked about this wicked world for half a century. How fine a spirit Audrey showed when she wiped off the mud that bigot threw in my face! 'Tis rank heresy to say so, but I somehow fancy you and Audrey, for all your sturdy Protestantism, stand a better chance of escaping hell

than I do; but not a word of that to Father Noel,' he added, with a smile.

It was not till afterwards that Michael recalled this speech; his mind was far too much taken up with the difficulties of the present to have any room for thoughts of the hereafter.

'I hear Greenhow's steps,' he said eagerly. 'Farewell, sir, and may we succeed better this time.'

John Radcliffe put both hands on his son's shoulders and looked searchingly into his eyes. For the first time in his selfish, reckless life a faint flicker of genuine love lit up his heart.

'We shall scarce meet again,' he said, with a sigh, 'and I'm half-ashamed to leave you to bear the brunt of things here. Yet, perhaps Sir Wilfrid Lawson will again befriend you.'

'Yes, yes,' said Michael hastily. 'You must go, sir, and here is Greenhow at the very door.'

'Then farewell,' said John Radcliffe, as the constable entered. 'We must not keep Greenhow any longer from his bed.'

With a hurried embrace and a grip of the hand, he turned away and pulled his hat low over his eyes and walked out of the cell, while Michael flung himself carelessly down upon the straw, secure that Greenhow would notice nothing in the gloom.

The Market Square seemed deserted, and John Radcliffe walked steadily on, his heart beating high with hope and a smile flickering about his lips as he caught the sounds of *Kinmont Willie* from the open doorway of the *Woolpack*. The noisy chorus of:

'Wi' the stroke of a sword instead of a file,
They ransom'd Willie in auld Carlisle,'

followed him far in the quiet night.

He had crossed the bridge over the Greta, and had passed Hye Hill, when sounds of a galloping horse behind him filled him with panic. To seek a hiding-place was out of the question; he could only walk quietly on, hoping that the dusk would protect him.

The horseman dashed past, then suddenly reined in his steed and confronted him. To his horror he saw that it was the Under-Sheriff, his handsome face flushed with wine, his eyes bright with anger.

‘You coward! you poltroon!’ he shouted. ‘This is the very chance I have been longing for. Your Quaker kinsman shall not step betwixt us again. You challenged me, and, by heaven! you shall not back out of it. Come! No need of seconds! We’ll fight now by the roadside.’

John Radcliffe hesitated. He saw that the Under-Sheriff had been drinking heavily; perhaps, after all, the best way would be to humour him and to fight on Michael’s behalf. It would surely be easy enough to give the fellow a slight wound, and then to go on his way.

‘Come!’ roared Henry Brownrigg, ‘none of your hypocritical delays. My blood’s up, and fight me you shall, Mr. Michael Derwent Radcliffe, since that’s your highly respectable name, you foundling beggar! you eater of the bread of charity!’

The colour rose to John Radcliffe’s face; he began to realise a little what he had made his son suffer.

‘I am ready!’ he cried, flinging off Michael’s coat and waistcoat, but taking care to retain the brown periwig.

Then, in the silence of the summer evening, the duel began.

But John Radcliffe had counted too much on his antagonist’s drunkenness. The Under-Sheriff, though too far gone to penetrate the disguise, was an accom-

plished swordsman, and even now had the better of his adversary. Moreover, while John Radcliffe was thinking solely how he could slightly disable his foe, Henry Brownrigg was animated by an overmastering desire to kill a man he detested—a man who stood in his way and had thwarted and shamed him.

By this time the assembly at the *Woolpack* had broken up, and the combatants could hear two of the singers approaching them. They were shouting out the old song:

‘Dacre’s gone to the war, Willy,
Dacre’s gone to the war.
Dacre’s Lord has crossed the flood
And left us for the war.’

Henry Brownrigg, wild at the thought of possible interruption, exerted all his strength to control his disordered faculties, and, just as the men from Keswick approached him, he triumphantly ran his foe through the body.

With a groan John Radcliffe fell to the ground, and the Under-Sheriff, sober enough now, bent over him.

‘Michael!’ he exclaimed, not without a faint feeling of remorse in his heart, ‘can I do anything for you?’

The dying man half raised himself, made an effort to speak, then, with a gasp of agony, sank back on the grass. The next moment Henry Brownrigg heard the death-rattle in his throat and knew that all was over.

‘Eh! God ha’ mercy on us! what has coom aboot?’ exclaimed Matt Birkett and his companion, approaching. ‘Sure enoo ’tis the fight betwixt the Under-Sheriff and Michael Derwent us heard un planning t’other night.’

‘My good fellow, you guess rightly enough,’ said Henry Brownrigg. ‘To my great regret, I have had the

misfortune to kill Mr. Derwent Radcliffe. As you know, he was the challenger, and I had no choice but to fight him!’

He walked across to the place where his adversary’s coat lay and drew from the pocket the silk handkerchief. His fingers happened to touch the embroidered corner, and, raising it to his eyes, he recognised Audrey’s stitchery in the monogram M. D. The sight touched him. Perhaps, after all, she had merely cared for him as a foster-brother and old playmate, and, remembering how short a time Michael had had to enjoy the knowledge that he was, after all, no nameless foundling, but a Radcliffe, his heart softened a little.

‘We will carry him down to the landing-place and row him across to Lord’s Island,’ he said to the two men. ‘’Tis more fitting that he should be taken to his own kin.’

‘Ay,’ said Birkett. ‘Poor young gentleman! I’m main sorry to think he’s gone, but, as you say, sir, the fight was of his ain seekin’.’

So they covered the dead face with the handkerchief and threw the coat over the body and bore it to the nearest boat. Then the two men took the oars, and the Under-Sheriff steered for the island. Leaving the men in the boat, and bidding them not carry the body to the house till he had prepared the relatives, he strode up to the main entrance.

The door stood open and Audrey was just coming forward, bearing in her hands a plate full of scraps for Rollo, the watch-dog.

He expected her to blush and falter at sight of him, but she looked him quietly in the face with a composure that was most daunting.

Had he been a total stranger, she would, he felt, have shown more animation; as it was, she seemed to be aware of his presence, yet to have all at once become so

entirely aloof from him that he found it most difficult to address her.

‘Good-evening,’ he said, raising his hat. She coldly acknowledged the greeting.

‘Do you wish to speak to my grandfather?’ she asked, her great grey eyes meeting his with the calm indifference which tells of a dead heart.

‘I scarcely know whether to ask for Sir Nicholas or not,’ said Henry Brownrigg. ‘The fact is, I’m the bearer of bad news.’

‘Then you had better speak to me,’ said Audrey, quietly. ‘My grandfather is very far from well and has felt the shock of all these troubles terribly.’

‘You are aware,’ said the Under-Sheriff, ‘that Michael Derwent—I mean your cousin—challenged me the other night. We fought this evening in the fields betwixt the Greta and the Derwent, and, to my great regret, I have mortally wounded him.’

Life and light came back to her eyes in a look of agony indescribable.

‘Mortally!’ she gasped. ‘You don’t know that for certain!—oh, it can’t be! it can’t be! He was so young and strong!’

‘It is, alas! only too true,’ said Henry Brownrigg, alarmed by the look on the girl’s face.

‘We may save him yet!’ she cried. ‘Where is he? Oh, Henry, for God’s sake take me to him!’

‘You do not understand,’ he faltered, moved for the moment by her distress. ‘I am trying to prepare you. It is all over. He is dead!’

With a stifled moan she threw herself down on the steps, hiding her face from the light and crying as if her heart would break. ‘He loved me,’ she sobbed. ‘He really loved me, though I never guessed it. Oh, fool! fool that I was! I chose your counterfeit love and thought it real, and never gave Michael aught but pain.’

‘My love for you was true,’ said Henry Brownrigg, and he meant what he said, for, according to his lights, he had loved this girl, though mercenary thoughts had stolen in to mar and spoil everything.

‘Audrey,’ he went on more eagerly, ‘let us forgive and forget; I will overlook the part you played the other night, and do you also overlook all that has chanced since then. Later on, our wedding, so many times postponed, shall at last take place, and we will bury the past in oblivion.’

‘No,’ she said, struggling to recover her self-command. ‘That can never, never be now. It has all been a dreadful mistake. Wedded, we should be miserable. Let us forgive each other, with God’s help, and then each go on our way. Michael has died for me. How can I forget that? Ah, you don’t understand, and I—I only see it now when it is too late, and I can do nothing for him.’

The Under-Sheriff stood looking at her in deep perplexity. Was this the gentle, even-tempered girl he had been betrothed to, or was it the same dignified, passionless woman who had confronted him on his arrival? Truly women were strange beings. He had thought of them as pleasant dolls to toy with in idle moments, but his doll had suddenly developed into the most complex of all mysteries. Suddenly he remembered that there was one thing which always made the sex rise to the occasion. A call upon her practical, womanly help would probably restore Audrey’s calmness.

‘After all was over,’ he said, ‘I rowed here, because I thought, since he was a Radcliffe, you would wish that his body should be brought to Lord’s Island.’

‘That was good of you,’ she said, in a more natural voice. ‘Which landing-place?’

‘The western one. I thought we should not be seen

there from the house. The men are waiting there with the body.'

She caught her breath at that word, and turned quickly towards the house, coming back in a minute or two with a lantern, for by this time the light had almost faded away.

The Under-Sheriff offered to carry it for her, but she shook her head and walked on swiftly in advance of him through the orchard and down to the sweet, wooded shore, where, not quite two years before, she had seen Michael spring out of his boat after that long absence at Cambridge. How vividly, and with what cruel pain, she recalled it all! His shy reverence of manner, the new expression in his eyes, which she had puzzled over, and his eager longing to find out the truth about his parentage. Alas! poor Mic! he knew all at last, but the knowledge had come too late. And he had died for love of her!

Her heart was anything but dead now. It was alive and awake and full of love for the man whose life she had wrecked so unconsciously.

And now they had reached the landing-stage, and Audrey, holding the lantern high, could clearly see the outline of her dead kinsman lying in the boat. At a word from the Under-Sheriff, Birkett and his companion lifted the body and bore it to the shore, swaying and staggering as they moved, in a way that made Audrey turn sick with horror. She gave the lantern to Henry Brownrigg and signed to the bearers to stop.

'Lay him down here,' she said, and, as they obeyed, she lifted the handkerchief from the dead face. The Under-Sheriff drew nearer with the lantern, but he did not look at the man he had slain; he looked instead, with jealous eyes, at the girl who was to have been his wife. All at once he saw a change pass over her grief-stricken face—a look of astonishment—then, with a

cry she started back and caught at his arm, as if for support.

‘What is it? What is it?’ she cried. ‘Am I going mad, or does death so change faces? He looks like my uncle Radcliffe.’

The Under-Sheriff bent hastily forward and held the light close to the dead face; he pushed back the brown periwig, and saw that the short, light hair beneath it was streaked with grey, while, seen more clearly, the face was that of a well-preserved man of about fifty. He stood there, utterly dumbfounded.

‘Whose, then, is this?’ he asked at last, taking up the handkerchief and showing the initials to Audrey.

‘’Tis Michael’s,’ she said, without hesitation. ‘I worked them for him years ago while he was at Cambridge. The clothes are Michael’s. Ah! don’t you see how it must have been? Michael must have tried to save him by taking his place in the lock-up.’

‘The knave!’ said Henry Brownrigg, furious to think how he had been cozened. ‘But he will find that such tricks are not to be played with impunity. This Jacobite father of his was ready enough, no doubt, to think that he would get the better of me and make his escape after.’

‘Was it, then, arranged that you and Michael should fight to-night?’ asked Audrey, still trembling with the mingled excitement and relief of the strange discovery she had made.

‘No; we were to have fought early this morning, when who should step in to mar everything but that Quaker kinsman of yours from Hye Hill. With much ado he prevailed upon Michael not to fight, and when, just now, I saw him, as I thought, alone, and found him ready enough to let the affair take place there and then, ’twas only natural that I should wish to settle matters.’

‘Yes, ’twas natural enough,’ said Audrey. ‘Scarce

anyone agrees with cousin Nathaniel Radcliffe as to fighting, and no one could blame you for what you have done. Still, I suppose, you will have to stand your trial.'

'Unless I fly the country,' said the Under-Sheriff, musingly. 'I must not linger here, in any case. You had best prepare Sir Nicholas for his brother's death, and tell him I greatly regret having been the unconscious instrument. I'll row back at once to Keswick, and the men can wait here and carry the body up to the house.'

Like one in a dream, Audrey watched him spring into the boat and push off, then she reverently covered John Radcliffe's face, and, telling the men to follow her, took up the lantern and led the way to the house.

So, after all, the Jacobite's escape had been frustrated! Uncle Radcliffe, with all his schemes and his light-hearted jests, had passed away, saving, by his death in this strange fashion, the son he had desired to kill as an infant and had all his life so grievously wronged.

But Audrey's thoughts could not linger with death, for her heart had come to life once more and was throbbing joyfully with the consciousness that Michael—Michael, who had so loved her all these years—was still alive and well.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE Under-Sheriff found his horse cropping the grass beneath the tree to which he had tied him up, and, mounting in haste, rode off in the direction of Millbeck Hall. Here he found only one sleepy serving-man waiting up for him, and, going quickly to his room, he sat down and wrote a letter to Squire Williamson, announcing to him the startling events of the night, and counselling that Michael should, for safety's sake, be at once removed to Cockermouth prison, there to await his trial. For himself, he said there was nothing left but to flee the country for a time. Having directed and sealed this letter, he went up to his mother's room, for he knew that he must be gone before a soul in Keswick was astir.

Mrs. Brownrigg listened in dismay to the tale of what had passed. 'It was a thousand pities,' she said severely, 'that Michael was not slain as you thought; his father would, anyhow, have come to the gallows, and then you would have been quit of both.'

The Under-Sheriff winced. His mother had a blunt way of putting into actual words what he preferred to keep hidden away in decent retirement as thoughts of the heart.

'I give out that I am fleeing the country,' he said, 'but, as a matter of fact, mother, I intend to go secretly to London, and there to work matters, I hope, to a more satisfactory issue. One thing is clear, if Michael is tried here in Cumberland, he will either get off scot-free or will have but a short term of imprisonment. That, as you can guess, will not suit my plans at all. I shall wed

Audrey Radcliffe yet and get the Goldrill estate, though she little thinks it. But Michael's trial must be removed to London, where, with a little management, I can give things a very different complexion. I shall go there to prepare matters now, and indeed there is ample time, for the Assizes are just over. I can safely leave him at Cockermouth till my plans are laid.'

Mrs. Brownrigg sighed. Her son's enforced absence, and the idea of ultimately being obliged to accept Audrey as her daughter-in-law, after all, tried her sorely.

'And what if you fail?' she said, dubiously, as with thrifty fingers she counted out the gold pieces he would need for his expenses. 'What if you fail, Hal?'

'I shall not fail, mother,' said the Under-Sheriff, confidently. 'I have bungled the matter, thanks to the twilight last evening, and, to own the truth, I should have found out the trick the Radcliffes had played easily enough had my head been clear. But Michael will not catch me tripping again. He has been daft enough to help his worthless father and to get himself into gaol, and in gaol he will stay far longer than he dreams.' Then, having made his farewells to his mother and sister, and left orders that the letter to Squire Williamson should be delivered the first thing in the morning, the Under-Sheriff quitted Millbeck Hall, and by sunrise was well on his way to Penrith.

By the time Squire Williamson walked across the Market Square to see the prisoner in the lock-up, half Keswick had heard the strange news of the Jacobite's escape, and of the duel that had been fought on the previous evening. For, had not William Hollins walked in from Stable Hills Farm to order Mr. John Radcliffe's coffin? And William was blessed with a real genius for giving a story in all its detail, so that half the town knew how at first it was supposed that the dead man was Michael Derwent, and how Mistress Audrey had

wept over the death of her old playfellow, and of her amazement when she found 'the corp,' as William called it, to be that of her great-uncle.

Had Michael been awake, he would have wondered what could have caused so much talking in the Market Square on a Sunday morning, when, as a rule, the most perfect quiet prevailed. But, having lain awake most of the night, wondering how matters would turn out, and whether his father would escape to the sea-coast, he now slept profoundly, and did **not** even hear the unlocking of the door when Greenhow ushered in Squire Williamson and a notary.

'That's never Michael Derwent,' said Squire Williamson, looking across the cell to the figure stretched face downwards on the straw.

'Sir,' said the notary, 'the Under-Sheriff in his letter speaks of the extraordinary change made in the other by the different colour of the peruke and the change of dress.'

As he spoke he crossed the cell and shook the sleeper by the shoulder. Michael instantly started up, and looked round in a bewildered way. Then, suddenly remembering all, and perceiving who his visitors were, he knew that concealment was no longer possible.

'I am here in my father's place, sir,' he said, bowing to Squire Williamson.

'Sir,' said the squire, 'I am heartily sorry to find you here. I know you for a warm-hearted fellow, and can well believe that you did this rash act with a generous intent, but you will, I fear, have to pay a heavy penalty, and you have gained naught as far as your father is concerned.'

'He has been arrested, then?' said Michael, his face falling.

'Your father, sir, is dead,' said the squire gravely.

Michael's face became colourless; a sick feeling of hor-

ror came over him as he remembered how full of life and energy his father had been only a few hours before. It was hardly possible to believe the squire's words.

‘How?’ he asked, breathlessly. ‘When?’

‘It was last night, almost directly after he left this place,’ said Squire Williamson. ‘It seems that the Under-Sheriff, who was riding back to Millbeck Hall, passed him not far from Hye Hill. Mr. Brownrigg owns that he had been drinking, and what with that and the twilight, he never noticed the change, but mistook him for you. He reminded him that the duel which, I understand, had been stopped once by Mr. Nathaniel Radcliffe, could be fought then without interruption, and, your father consenting, they fought in the fields near the Greta, and it was not until Mr. Brownrigg had taken the body back to Lord’s Island that he and Mistress Audrey discovered that it was not your corpse, but that of Mr. John Radcliffe.’

‘I might have known it to be a piece of Henry Brownrigg’s work,’ said Michael, bitterly. ‘Squire, you know well that all my life he has never lost a chance of thwarting and hurting me. Your son knows how it used to be when we were lads together at school. And now—now when I have a right to bring him to justice—I am fast in gaol, and can’t stir hand or foot to avenge my father.’

‘The Under-Sheriff has fled,’ said Squire Williamson. ‘And as for vengeance, I should leave that, if I were you, Michael. You cannot be allowed out again upon bail after deliberately aiding a Jacobite to escape a second time. You have made your bed, my poor fellow, and you will have to lie on it. I am sorry enough that it falls to me to order you to be sent at once to Cocker-mouth gaol, but I can’t run the risk of keeping you any longer here in Keswick. I understand that William Hollins is in the town, and if you wish, he can row across

to Herbert's Isle and get you such things as you mean to take with you.'

Michael thanked the kindly old man, and begged to see William Hollins at once, for the escort was to take him to Cockermouth at noon. The talkative old farmer gave him a hearty greeting, and would have lingered telling him every detail that he had imparted to the people of Keswick, had not the constable remonstrated, and pointed out that the time left was short. So he hastened away promising to row to both islands and to return with the things Michael would need.

'For noo that you be the heir we must treat ye as such,' he said; 'and 't is but fitting that your ain kith and kin should hear the last news o' ye. I'll be back afore lang, Bill Greenhow, and doan't ye go a-lettin' the escort carry Mr. Radcliffe to gaol till ye see me agin.'

Left once more alone, Michael's thoughts returned to his father. Only a day or two before, in that very cell, he had felt that it was a hard thing to forgive the wrong that had been done him by his abandonment at birth. But now he was inclined only to remember the kindlier traits in his father's character, which, just at the last, he had been able to see. His life had certainly been reckless and selfish, but there was something in the idea of that silent fight in the fields between the Greta and the Derwent that appealed to Michael. If long ago his father had thought of drowning him, and had finally abandoned him higher up the Derwent, where it flowed through the wooded heights of Borrowdale, he had, at any rate, died fighting in his stead further down the selfsame river.

True to his word, William Hollins returned before noon, bringing with him Michael's brown peruke, the clothes he would need during his imprisonment, and a sealed packet from Sir Nicholas Radcliffe. It contained

a purse with twenty gold pieces and a kindly worded letter, which greatly pleased Michael.

‘DEAR NEPHEW :

Your kindly effort to save my brother hath endeared you to me. He has not treated you as a father and it was scarce to be expected that you could have a son’s feeling towards him. That you should have a second time run so great a risk for him, though sharing neither his religious nor his political views, touches me more than I can well express. Use the enclosed during your imprisonment to furnish whatever comforts are permitted, and let me know when I can in any way serve you. Doubtless Sir Wilfrid Lawson will ride over from Isel to see you and hear all that has befallen, and I am confident that so just a man will see that your blame in the matter was but small. Allow me to sign myself

Your affectionate uncle,

NICHOLAS RADCLIFFE.’

Slipped inside was a tiny, three-cornered note from Audrey, bearing only a few lines.

‘DEAR MIC :

I well-nigh broke my heart at hearing of your death last night. Thank God! I quickly found the news was false, and that you are alive and well. Have a care of yourself, and do not lose heart in gaol, and in any difficulty fail not to send word to thy kinswoman and old playmate,

AUDREY RADCLIFFE.’

With the reading of those words a great hope rose in Michael’s heart. After all, what did imprisonment matter if Audrey loved him, or might in time come to love him? Surely, surely, now that her love for the Under-Sheriff had been so rudely shattered, now that she found she had been in love with the baseless fragment of a dream, there was some chance that, as Zinogle had said, the ‘Whirligig of time would bring in his revenges.’

And now there came the sound of horse-hoofs without,

and Greenhow opened the door and began to bind his arms, though not so tightly as on the night of the arrest. While the process was going on, Zinogle, with his fiddle under his arm, boldly stepped in through the open doorway, and, with a pacifying word to the constable, approached the prisoner.

‘So thou art off to Cockermouth gaol, lad,’ he said. ‘I’m sorry to hear that, but it’s just what the old landlord at Cockermouth prophesied when thou wert but a little chap. If you will go standing up for those that ye don’t agree with, you’ll hae mony a sair heid.’

‘It can’t be helped, Zinogle,’ said Michael, with a smile. ‘Some of us are made that way. Besides, in this case it was for my own father. After all, “blood is thicker than water.”’

‘It’s wrong to speak against the dead,’ said the fiddler, ‘but I must say that Mr. John Radcliffe was a precious long time in finding out the truth of that proverb.’

‘Let the past alone,’ said Michael, with a catch in his voice. ‘He took my quarrel upon him and was slain in mistake for me.’

‘Oh, I’m not questioning his bravery,’ said Zinogle. ‘As far as that goes, he was every inch a man; ’twas moral courage he lacked.’

Michael made no reply, and the old fiddler, with a suspicious moisture about his eyes, watched him as he rode down the street with his escort.

‘All the moral courage went instead to the son,’ he muttered, ‘and all the heart, too. If ever there was a selfish dog it was Mr. John Radcliffe, and we are not yet at the end of the mischief he’s wrought. Well, I must e’en hurry my stumps to the kirk, and be in time to play my fiddle in the psalm after sermon or the vicar will be hauling me over the coals. Strange things have come about in this place since I fiddled last Sunday. ’Tis a topsy-turvy world!’

CHAPTER XXXII

Recollections of Michael Derwent.

So much has passed since I last wrote that it is not easy to set down all with ink and pen. In my hand I hold a small note in Audrey's writing and cannot refrain from thinking what a slight thing it was to work so great a difference. For during the last week it has twice chanced that I had to submit to the ignominy of being bound, and, though the first time the humiliation seemed to me well-nigh intolerable, yet it is wonderful how circumstances alter cases, for, on that Sunday morning, with Audrey's little note in my breast-pocket, I felt quite indifferent to the cords with which Greenhow made my arms secure. Strange that half a dozen lines in a woman's handwriting can so affect a man's whole world! The words were vague enough, too, and pledged the writer to nothing; yet somehow the note had filled me with hope, and, as I made my farewells, even dear old Zinogle's funnily pathetic face, with its smiling mouth and its wet eyes, could not send me on my way hither to gaol in anything but excellent spirits.

At Hye Hill, as we rode past, Nathaniel Radcliffe sat reading in the porch where, a few nights ago, Audrey had sunk down faint and exhausted. Greenhow allowed me to stop for a few minutes and speak with him, and he, knowing well what Cockermonth gaol was like, gave me a few practical hints, which I found useful enough when I got here. Moreover, as usual, the mere sight of

his tranquil face did me good and seemed to lift me into a purer atmosphere.

But I am rambling on with my more recent recollections, when, as far as I can remember, the last entry I made in my book at Herbert's Isle recorded how, on the night of my mothing expedition, I encountered the Borrowdale Bogle and stood by the beck with knees unsteady and heart thumping in my breast, while the spectre, with upraised and grisly hand, approached me.

Sitting now on a three-legged stool in a very ill-lighted cell in Cockermouth prison, I must try briefly to set down the outline of what has since happened, though my gaoler has procured me very indifferent writing materials at a most extortionate price, and, moreover, writing in gaol is not easy, for there seems a weight upon my pen, and my brain works slowly and my words halt. More than ever do I now marvel at the wonderful book John Bunyan wrote in Bedford gaol, but the tinker was one of a thousand and I am but an ordinary mortal, and my pen drags on wearily, while I endure the stifling heat of a July day in an evil-smelling room scarce large enough to swing a cat in. However, I have the place to myself, heaven be praised!

I had writ thus far when who should come to visit me but Sir Wilfrid Lawson. His jolly face looked graver than I had seen it for many a day, for the small-pox had given them much anxiety, though now, luckily, it has abated, and the stricken patients are getting about once more.

'Well, Michael,' he said, 'what is all this I hear of you? Sir Nicholas Radcliffe writes me that you are his nephew, after all, and that the truth has just come to light.'

'Ay, sir,' I answered. 'No one but my father knew the truth of things save Father Noel, and his tongue

was tied because he had heard of the matter in confession.'

'Tis a strange story,' said the baronet, 'and pretty Mistress Audrey hath been mixed up in it, I hear, and hath been jilted in consequence by the Under-Sheriff.'

'Yes, sir; she had naturally enough been taking food to her great-uncle when he was in hiding, and had in fact played the part of the Borrowdale Bogle the better to disguise herself. I chanced to come across her one night, and so learnt the whole truth, and it seemed to me impossible to let her wander about like that alone, when the Under-Sheriff had set spies to track the bogle.'

'Ay, I see it all plainly enough,' said Sir Wilfrid. 'You went to protect the lady and cared little enough for the Jacobite traitor, John Radcliffe.'

'That is very true, sir. How could I then care for him? As to his views, I hated them, but I saw no harm in helping him to quit the country and aiding the kinsman of those who had ever been my best friends.'

The worthy baronet laughed.

'I told thee how it would be, lad, when thou wert but an imp of ten. An thou wilt champion everyone thou dost deem harshly dealt with, thou wilt not find this world a bed of roses. Bully Barton did his best to batter thy skull for befriending the Quaker long ago, and now Bully Brownrigg will assuredly do his best to ruin thee for defending a Jacobite.'

'The Jacobite was my own father, sir,' I said.

'Ay, to be sure; when did he own that? I should like to have been present to see the Under-Sheriff's face.'

'He owned it, sir,' I replied, 'on the night of our arrest, as we stood by the banks of the Derwent. He owned it in excellent time to shield Mistress Audrey when that vile Under-Sheriff would have set a scandal on foot about her. I would you could have heard my

father's voice as he stepped forward and said I was his son by his first marriage, and that it was surely the most natural thing in the world for Mistress Audrey to be protected by her cousin. That moment made up for all the years of dishonour. Had you been there, sir, you would understand how, after that, I could think of no differences of view, but only remember that he was my father and that he had sheltered Audrey from that brute's foul slander.'

'Yes, yes, it was all very natural,' said Sir Wilfrid, 'but why need you a second time run your chivalrous neck into the noose?'

'My father thought that, if brought to trial, he should not stand a chance of escaping the gallows, sir. He asked me as to Cockermouth prison and the chances of escape from it. Then it flashed into my mind that if he meant to escape we might contrive it far more easily from Keswick. Well, you have heard the rest: how he changed wigs and clothes with me and got away out of the town, where, unluckily, the Under-Sheriff overtook him, and, mistaking him for me, induced him to fight and killed him. Have you any notion, sir, where Henry Brownrigg has fled? Squire Williamson only told me he had quitted the country.'

'No one seems to know,' said Sir Wilfrid; 'and even were he brought to trial he would probably get off. I shrewdly suspect that he is by this time in London trying to get evidence against you, lad. And I am uneasy about it, for Mr. Wharncliffe once told me he thought you were rash in mixing over-freely with suspected people. However, we will not go half-way to meet our troubles. But I fancy that now you are heir of Goldrill, Henry Brownrigg hates you more than ever, and we must be on our guard against him, for he is as crafty as a fox. The one bright spot in the matter is that pretty Audrey Radcliffe is no longer betrothed to him. Take

my advice, lad, woo her and wed her before the Under-Sheriff returns to spoil sport.'

'Would to heaven I could, sir, but that is not so easy in gaol,' I said, looking round the hateful little cell with its heavily barred window.

'Oh, we will have you out of this before long,' said Sir Wilfrid, cheerfully. 'Never fear, lad! And when you are free, why, remember the saying, "Happy is the wooing that's not long adoin'," and with that he left me to meditate on this congenial advice and to dream over a future which in its brightness contrasted strangely with the gloom of my prison cell.

It must have been towards the end of July that the news reached me in prison of how the French had invaded England, had burnt Teignmouth to the ground, had killed the cattle, and desecrated the churches, destroying altars and pulpits, bibles and prayer-books, and scattering the luckless people, who were quite without means of defence. However, such an insult roused all England. Everywhere troops of horse and foot were formed, while the Jacobites were execrated on every hand, and all loyal Englishmen were ready to cry 'God save King William and Queen Mary.'

I was personally delighted with the turn affairs had taken, yet, no doubt, my own prospects were rendered more gloomy by the hatred of the Jacobites, which increased in bitterness every day. Sir Wilfrid even was fain to admit that this was the case, though he cheerfully reminded me that the Assizes were not coming off yet awhile, and that in a place where I was so well known people were not likely to credit me with anything worse than the rashness of youth.

But one night in August I was roused from sleep by the sudden glare of a lantern, and, looking up, found my gaoler shaking me by the shoulder.

'What's amiss?' I asked, sleepily.

‘You must dress with all speed,’ said the fellow; ‘the governor will be here anon to speak with you.’

Grumbling at the trouble of getting up at such an hour, I threw on my clothes and saw, much to my surprise, that the gaoler was thrusting all my possessions into a couple of saddlebags.

‘What are you about, Ned?’ I asked.

‘Obeying my orders, sir,’ he said grumpily, and not another word could I get from him.

In a few minutes steps sounded in the corridor and in walked the governor; a very civil man he was, and owing, I think, to his liking for Sir Wilfrid, he had treated me kindly enough. With him was a stout, red-faced officer, whose uniform was buttoned so tightly over his portly figure that it seemed as if at any moment the seams might split.

‘This is the prisoner, Captain Plummer,’ said the governor. ‘Mr. Radcliffe, I have just received orders for your removal from Cockermouth to London, and Captain Plummer wishes to start at once.’

He showed me the warrant he had received, and my heart sank, for I felt convinced that this was all planned by the Under-Sheriff.

‘Do you mean, sir, that my trial is removed to London?’ I asked, in some perplexity.

‘I know nothing more than you see here in this letter of instructions,’ said the governor. ‘But I should think that would probably be the case. Very possibly, too, your evidence is wanted at once by the government.’

At this I could not forbear laughing.

‘The government will be bitterly disappointed if it expects to learn anything of importance from me,’ I said. ‘Is it likely that any Jacobite would confide secrets to an admirer of King William and a Protestant?’

‘Maybe not,’ said the governor, ‘but you are just dis-

covered to be the son of a well-known Jacobite plotter, and you must take the consequences, sir.'

This was true enough, but it was cold comfort, and, as I stood there while Ned fastened on the manacles which Captain Plummer had brought with him from London, a chill sense of dread began to steal over me. These new-fangled gyves allowed a little more freedom than was possible with arms tightly bound to one's sides, yet I somehow minded them more than the cords which Audrey had unloosed for me in the lock-up at Keswick. Oh, if only it were possible to see her once more before going to the south! That of course was out of the question, but I vowed that I would leave no stone unturned and would somehow contrive to send her a message.

The governor of the gaol took leave of me kindly enough and said he would let Sir Wilfrid Lawson know of my removal; then, with the first grey light of dawn just streaking the eastern sky, we rode away from Cockermouth, Captain Plummer grumbling much at the ill road which made travelling by night no easy task.

After the close confinement of the last few weeks, it was pleasant enough to be on horseback again, even in manacles, and, as we rode along the shore of Bassenthwaite, my mind began to work busily with plans for reaching Audrey.

At length I saw the battlemented tower of St. Kentigern of Crosthwaite rising from the trees that stood about it, and soon my heart was beating high with hope, for there, in the rosy morning light, lay Derwentwater and its wooded islets, and beyond was my beloved Borrowdale with the mountains that had from the very first been such good friends to me. It was still very early and hardly any folk were astir in the little town. At Hye Hill they were evidently sleeping; at the *Royal Oak* they were only just beginning to show signs of life. We rode into the courtyard and found a drowsy ostler wash-

ing his face at the pump. Captain Plummer called for ale and bread and cheese, while the three men that formed our escort began to water the horses. I paced up and down the yard, somewhat stiff after the ride, and on the lookout for any serving-wench or stableman by whom I could send a message to Zinogle. At last, to my great satisfaction, I caught sight of the landlord's little son.

‘Billy,’ I said, ‘don’t you remember me?’

He lifted his twinkling blue eyes and looked at me for a moment.

‘Yes, you are Mr. Derwent; leastways you was.’

‘I’ll give you a groat, Billy, if you’ll hurry off this minute and fetch here old Snoggles, the fiddler.’

Billy darted off without a moment’s delay; a groat was untold wealth to him. He returned in about ten minutes, dragging poor old Zinogle after him in triumph.

‘The imp would scarce let me take off my nightcap,’ said the fiddler, ‘and my mind misgave me all the way here that he was but tricking me. In the name of all that’s outlandish, how did you come here, lad?’

‘They are taking me up to London, Zinogle,’ I said, hurriedly, ‘though whether to the Gatehouse or the Tower, I don’t yet know. But, depend upon it, this is the Under-Sheriff’s doing, and I fear things will go hardly with me out of Cumberland. I promised Mistress Audrey to let her know if anything happened. So, an you love me, Zinogle, go post-haste to Lord’s Island and tell her that Captain Plummer and his men are taking me to the south. Bid her farewell for me, and say——’

But there I hesitated. What was I to bid him say? How could I possibly put into words just what I longed to tell her? To have done it in any case would have been difficult, but to do it in cold blood by the lips of

a messenger was out of the question. Yet how hard it seemed to be dragged away to a London gaol with never a chance of letting her know all the truth! And, remembering how desperate a struggle I had had to keep silent during our walk to and from the hiding-place among the fells only a few weeks ago, I was the more chafed to find words so difficult to frame now that it lay in my power to send her a message.

‘Well, lad,’ said Zinogle, with a smile lurking about the corners of his mouth, ‘am I to tell Mistress Audrey all that I see writ in your face?’

‘Yes,’ I said. ‘Tell her what I can’t put into words, Zinogle. You have understood me all along, old friend. Make her understand the truth, too. Tell her how I wish that we might have had again the chance I dared not take in Ashness woods. Tell her that all I kept from saying then I long to tell her now, and see that you say this, Zinogle—that as to my being heir to Goldrill, that can make no change, since I will hold nothing that is not also hers.’

‘I’ll do the best I can for ye, lad,’ said the old man earnestly; ‘but in truth I’m flayte, as the dales-folk say. ’Tis a hard task you’ve set me. I’ll not linger noo, but be off to the island and have a crack with Mistress Audrey before the tone of your voice is out of my mind. Good luck go with you, lad, and may we soon have you back again in Keswick.’

I echoed that wish very heartily, and watched the old fellow hurry out of the yard of the *Royal Oak* with envious eyes.

‘Come, Mr. Radcliffe,’ said Captain Plummer, ‘you had best feed while you may; we shall lie at Appleby to-night and have a hot day’s work before us.’

I followed him into the inn, pausing, however, to give little Billy the groat he had earned, and bidding him tell Zinogle where we lay that night, if he should chance

to see him again, for a wild hope seized me that perhaps Audrey might send me a message or a letter by the old fiddler, since in those days to send a letter by post was not a thing to be accomplished in our part of the world with ease, letters only being delivered in Cumberland once a week, and then always with risk of miscarriage. And all that hot summer day, as we travelled along the dusty high-road, I had a foolish feeling that Zinogle was following us, and whenever we paused to bait our horses I felt a pang of disappointment because he never appeared, as I had hoped, to join our cavalcade.

Then I cursed my folly for having sent such a message, for, after all, though I knew Audrey's love for the Under-Sheriff had been shattered, was it likely that she would so soon turn her thoughts towards one she had known all her life as friend and comrade? Alas! I had often heard that women seldom loved those they knew best. It was far more likely that in a moment of depression and indifference she would yield to the wish of her grandfather and wed the son of Sir Francis Salkeld, who, I very well knew, had long been one of her servants.

CHAPTER XXXIII

It was still quite early in the morning when Zinogle landed on Lord's Island and walked up to the half-ruined mansion. The servants were astir, however, and Betty, the housemaid, with clogs on her feet, and a big mop in her busy hands, was cleaning the paving stones in the hall.

'Lawk-a-mercy-me, Snoggles! hoo ye do mak a body start!' she exclaimed, as the fiddler mischievously stole up behind her and gripped the handle of the mop.

'A thousand pardons, lass, but I'm in sair haste,' said Zinogle, 'and want speech with Mistress Audrey on a matter of great importance.'

'What! at this time o' day? Man, she be sleeping, and I'm not the one to waken her, for she be sair spent since a' the troubles coom about.'

'Nathless, Betty, lest worse troubles should come you had best go and rouse her. And here, as good luck will have it, the lady herself comes.'

He broke off, bowing low as Audrey hastily crossed the hall, her wistful grey eyes eagerly scanning his face. Evidently she had dressed with the utmost speed, and her hair hung loose and disordered all about her shoulders.

'I saw your boat, Zinogle,' she exclaimed. 'Is anything amiss? Have you brought news from Cocker-mouth?'

'If I can have speech wi' ye for ten minutes, mistress,

I will tell you all,' said the fiddler. 'I was sent here to you with a message.'

'Come into the study; Sir Nicholas will not be down yet awhile,' she said, eagerly. 'Is it good news or bad, Zinogle?'

The fiddler hesitated. He closed the door after them and sat down as she bade him on one of the old carved chairs.

'Mistress,' he said, 'it is like most things in this world, neither wholly good nor altogether bad, but mixed. I was roused early this morning by little Billy, son of the landlord at the *Royal Oak*, and he bade me hasten at once to the courtyard to speak with Mr. Michael Radcliffe. I found him there manacled, and on his way, in charge of Captain Plummer and his men, to London, though whether he was to be sent to the Gatehouse or to the Tower, he had not heard. Seeing clearly enough an enemy's hand in this sudden removal from Cumberland, and having promised to let you know what befell him, he asked me to come to the island and tell you.'

Audrey had turned deathly pale.

'When once they have him away from his own neighbourhood they may twist and distort what has passed easily enough!' she exclaimed. 'Oh, Zinogle! if only I were a man and could travel there myself! What a miserable thing it is to be a weak woman, tied and bound by a thousand conventions, and unable to stir, however much one may long to help!'

''Twould scarce mend matters were ye a man, mistress,' said the old German fiddler, with a quiet smile.

'Was that all the message?' said Audrey. 'Did he say no more but just that?'

'Yes, he said more,' said Zinogle, gravely, 'and I would to God I could put it rightly to ye, dear lady. I've some skill with the fiddle, but none at all with car-

rying lovers' messages. I would I could mak ye feel his words as I felt them.'

'Lovers' messages, did you say, Zinogle?' she faltered.

'Ay, to be sure, Mistress Audrey. It's your lover he's been ever since he was a little lad in Borrowdale. Sure you understand that much! If you could but have seen his face just now 'twad have told you more than any bungling words of mine can ever do. Think of the pity of it, dear mistress! For years he has loved you, and been forced to hold his tongue. Then, when seventeen months ago he heard of your betrothal to the Under-Sheriff, he looked like one that had got his death-blow. And now—now when Hope had come once more into his life, they whirl him away to London without so much as a glimpse of you, or the chance of a single word. Mistress, 'tis not every day that such a love as that is laid at your feet. You'll be sayin', maybe, that 'tis oversoon to think again of love and marriage, but for the lad's sake don't let pride and the thought of gossiping busybodies keep you silent, when silence means doubt and pain to him. And there were these words I mind me well that he said to me as we stood there just now. "Tell her," says he, "hoo I wish I might have had again the chance I dared not take in Ashness woods. Tell her that all I kept from saying then I long to tell her now. And as to my being heir to Goldrill, that can make no change, since I will hold nothing that is not also hers."'

The colour came and went in Audrey's face; her eyes were brimful of tears. When the old fiddler at length paused, she stole across the room to the open window—that very window through which John Radcliffe had climbed a few weeks ago, bringing by his advent so many changes into all their lives. She looked across the calm water to Skiddaw and Latrigg, and she remembered how, on that night of the arrest, as they had rowed along, the

summer lightning had revealed their well-known outlines, and how the sudden flash had revealed also that look of pain on Michael's face, that glance in his hazel eyes which had recalled to her the wounded stag in Borrowdale.

'He shall never have to bear one single pang that I can hinder,' she thought to herself. And yet how was it to be contrived? How could she do much for a man who, even now, had not definitely asked her to wed him; nay, who had not been able, save in the vaguest way, and through a messenger, to declare his love? Ah! if only there were some woman to whom she could turn for advice, some friend who would understand how it was with both of them!

All at once she remembered how he had spoken to her of Mistress Mary Denham. She had heard, too, a little more of Mistress Denham's friendship with him from Sir Wilfrid Lawson, when, a fortnight ago, he had come over to call on them and to discuss the arrangements that would have to be made before Michael's trial took place. What was the tale he had told?—something about a lover or a friend that Mistress Denham had contrived to rescue in the times of the Rye House plot, when he had been unjustly imprisoned in Newgate. A conviction that she could hardly have explained sprang up in her mind, that this unknown Mary Denham was the one being in all the world to whom she could freely open her heart, the one woman who would assuredly understand and know how to advise and help her.

'Zinogle,' she said, turning to the old fiddler with wet eyes, but with a glow of hope in her face that did not escape his keen glance, 'you are the best of messengers. Tell me, if I got you a horse and the money you would need by the way, could you act as my messenger? Could you go to London, take the letter I am about to write, and wait for the reply, doing besides any

errand in London that the lady I am writing to may see fit to entrust you with?’

‘Ay, mistress,’ said Zinogle, heartily, ‘I would go to the ends of the earth for you, and for him that loves you. And if I have a fresh horse, why, ’tis like enough I shall overtake Captain Plummer’s cavalcade on the way to Appleby, and might get leave to join them. ’Tis as well not to travel alone on the North road.’

‘Then go and bid Betty prepare you some breakfast, and tell Duncan to row across to the farm and order the groom to put his saddle on Firefly in an hour’s time. Firefly is my own mare, so I have a right to do what I please with her.’

The old fiddler withdrew, and Audrey took writing materials from a desk on the table, and sat, pen in hand, vainly trying to put into words all that filled her heart. It seemed an impossible task that she had attempted, and one phrase after another was dismissed as too stiff or too free, till at length, in despair, she found that time was slipping away and that her sheet was still almost a blank. Then throwing aside all conventionalities, she wrote off rapidly the following lines:

‘DEAR MADAM :

You were, I know, a good friend to Michael when he was in London, and he spoke so warmly to me of all that you had done for him that I venture now to come to you for help and counsel. Strange things have passed here of late. The gentleman you knew best as Mr. Calverley, but who, in truth, was my great-uncle Radcliffe, proved to be Michael’s father, and Michael twice attempted to help him to escape to France, not that he agreed with his opinions, but because he wanted to help us. In consequence of the part I played in helping my uncle’s escape the marriage arranged betwixt me and the Under-Sheriff, Mr. Brownrigg, will never take place; indeed, I now see that it has, from the first, been only a mistake—I did not truly know him. Michael being very angry at some words which Mr. Brownrigg spoke to me when we were all arrested,

called him out, but at the appointed time our Quaker kinsman persuaded them not to fight. Later on it seems that Michael tried to help his father to escape from gaol by changing clothes with him, and Mr. Brownrigg, deceived by the twilight and not altogether sober, insisted on fighting him when they met not far from Keswick. He slew him, thinking, of course, all the time that it was Michael, and it was not until he brought the body here that we discovered it to be my uncle Radcliffe. Mr. Brownrigg escaped, some say abroad, but others think to London, and Michael was removed to Cockermouth, there to await his trial for aiding and abetting the escape of a Jacobite. I have just learnt, however, that he is now being removed to London, and you will easily understand how greatly this adds to his danger. Here in Cumberland, where he was well known and where many understand just how things befell, he would have got a fair trial. But in London things might easily be distorted, particularly if, as we fear, his rival, Mr. Brownrigg, is working secretly against him.

Dear madam, all this is, I fear, very incoherent, but pray, pray help us if you can. If only those in authority could learn the real facts of the case, I am confident he would run little risk, but I dread Mr. Brownrigg's secret plotting, for a story like this can be easily twisted. Worst of all is the difficulty of letting Michael know the truth as to my own heart. It is only since that dreadful moment when I thought he had been killed that I knew what he was to me. And it was but a week before that—from words let fall by Uncle Radcliffe—that I in the least guessed that Michael had for years loved me. We had grown up together, and thoughts of such love as that never crossed my mind. I fancied that I loved Mr. Brownrigg; nay, I did love him as far as I then understood what love means. Oh, if you would but tell me what I can do now! Michael hath sent me a message by old Zinogle; I see from it that he loves me, yet to be wooed in this fashion makes my part far from easy. If I followed my impulse I should hasten after him to London; yet perhaps this might only injure his cause and make people think worse of me than they already do. And yet it seems to me that I ought to be there, for it was through my fault that he was mixed up in this affair, and oh, dear madam! I love him and would give all that I have to make up to him if possible for what he has suffered through me during these last years. Will you see him in London?

Zinogle will let you know which prison they take him to. Will you make him understand what is in my heart? I cannot tell him in a letter. But I think you, being a woman, will understand, and will be able to make him understand, too. This is an unusual request to make to a stranger, but I seem to know you both through Michael and through what Sir Wilfrid Lawson has told me of you. Therefore I hope you will pardon my boldness, and

Believe me, your obliged, humble servant,

AUDREY RADCLIFFE.'

Having folded and directed this letter, she sealed it with many misgivings, and then wrote a few brief words to Michael himself, taking refuge now in the familiar, friendly style which seemed most natural between them.

Zinogle returned while she was still writing, and hastily signing her name, she began to give him directions and to consult him as to the money he would need on the journey. All the time her heart was full of eager longing to go with him, and though she said not a word as to this, the old man had wit enough to divine it and went away from the island in good spirits, sure that matters looked hopeful for his godson.

He frowned, however, when just as he was riding off from Stable Hills Farm he perceived young Mr. Salkeld approaching, for he knew that he was one of Audrey's admirers, and that his suit had been favoured in former times by Sir Nicholas.

'Now, if three men all urge a woman to take a particular course will she have strength enough to resist them? If they were villains urging her to do wrong, she would be as brave as a lion; but being all good men, and likable enough, will she be able to withstand their plausible talk, and all that they are sure to say as to the way in which her name is being bandied about in the neighbourhood? She's a proud lassie, and if once they get upon that tack I fear me she'll think more of her reputa-

tion than of my godson's heart. Women are strange folk! strange folk!'

And musing after this fashion, the old man rode back to Keswick, where Billy informed him that Captain Plummer and his prisoner had taken the road to Appleby.

CHAPTER XXXIV

ZINOGLÉ heard of Captain Plummer and his prisoner at more than one wayside inn and at Penrith, but he did not overtake them. On making inquiries, however, as he rode into the quaint little town of Appleby, he learnt that they had put up at the *King's Head*, and accordingly he handed over Firefly to the ostler of that comfortable red-brick inn, and made his way into the public room. There were some half dozen people present, all supping after the toils of the day, and sitting at table with them were the officer and his charge, who evidently were objects of great interest to the other travellers. Captain Plummer talked with his next-door neighbour, but Michael remained silent, looking tired and depressed, and as though eating in chains was anything but appetising. His face lighted up, however, when at last he caught sight of the old fiddler.

‘Why, Zinogle!’ he exclaimed. ‘What do you make here?’

‘I’m on my way to London, sir,’ said Zinogle, taking the vacant place beside him and calling for a plate of beef and a tankard of ale.

Captain Plummer glanced at him sharply.

‘’Tis the finest musician in Cumberland, sir,’ said Michael. ‘Presently, no doubt, he will favour the company with a tune on his fiddle.’

Now, most fortunately, it chanced that the captain was a great lover of music, and when, after supper, Zinogle played to them very good-naturedly as long as they cared to listen, he was so much delighted with the

fellow's genius that he was perfectly ready to allow him to ride in their company for the rest of the journey. This, moreover, was a natural enough request on the old German's part, for the North road was by no means free from dangers. It was extremely easy to lose one's way altogether between Pontefract and Doncaster, while a lonely traveller always ran the risk of being attacked by highwaymen.

'Ride with us to-morrow, by all means,' said the captain, as the company dispersed for the night. 'We shall be starting at six o'clock.' And so saying, he went out into the passage to give some order to one of the men, and Zinogle seized the opportunity to thrust Audrey's note into the prisoner's hand.

'You saw her?' he asked, his face lighting up as he put the letter into his breast-pocket.

'Ay, and there's much to hope and little to dread,' said Zinogle. 'Depend upon it, lad, her heart turns to you. And in damp weather,' he added, as the captain returned, 'the strings will play the very devil with you.' He thrust his fiddle into its case and made as though he were entirely occupied with it.

'Do you play the air *Hope Told a Flattering Tale?*' asked Michael, glancing at the fiddler with latent amusement.

'No, sir, it's not to my fancy; a peevish, melancholy tune I call it. Give me a cheerful strain. Good-night to you, gentlemen; I shall be ready by your leave to join you at six in the morning.'

'Very good,' said Captain Plummer, taking the candle from the chambermaid. 'Now, Mr. Radcliffe, I must trouble you to follow me.' And he marched his prisoner upstairs, the maid looking after them with wide eyes, and shaking her fist at the captain's portly form when she was quite convinced that he would not see her.

'The hard-hearted wretch!' she exclaimed as she

lighted a second candle for the fiddler, 'making a fine young gentleman like that sleep in irons! I wish I'd the ironing of him!'

'Tut, tut, lass, he only obeys his orders,' said Zinogle, chucking her under the chin. 'Moreover, he hath a pretty taste for music. As to the young gentleman, don't trouble your kind heart about him, for he'll soon be through his troubles, being as innocent of Jacobite plots as you are.'

'You're a fond, foolish old man,' said the maid saucily, thrusting the candlestick into his hand. ''Tis not innocence that saves a man from the gallows. Many an innocent man has been hung. 'Tis interest with them that be in power, and the sharp wits of those that love the prisoner.'

And with that she began to sing the ballad of *The Prickly Bush*, which so took the old fiddler's fancy that he would not go to bed until she had taught it him.

Michael, in the room above, had found no opportunity of opening Audrey's note, being never free from Captain Plummer's observation. Tingling with impatience, he had to submit to seeing the candle extinguished, and there only remained to him the comfort of recalling Zinogle's words and of clasping tightly in his hand the unread letter. Meanwhile, through the floor he could distinctly hear the weird tune of *The Prickly Bush*; nay, even the words were plainly audible in the maid's clear voice, and then in Zinogle's deep tones.

'O hangman, hold thy hand,' he cried,
'O hold thy hand awhile ;
For I can see my own dear father
Coming over yonder stile.'

'O father, you have brought me gold ?
Or will you set me free ?
Or be you come to see me hung,
All on this high gallows tree ?'

‘No, I have not brought thee gold,
I will not set thee free ;
But I am come to see thee hung,
All on this high gallows tree.’

Chorus.

‘O the prickly bush, the prickly bush,
It pricked my heart full sore ;
If ever I get out of the prickly bush,
I’ll never get in any more !’

‘O hangman, hold thy hand,’ he cried,
‘O hold thy hand awhile ;
For I can see my own dear mother
Coming over yonder stile.’

‘O mother, have you brought me gold ?
Or will you set me free ?
Or be you come to see me hung,
All on this high gallows tree ?’

‘No, I have not brought thee gold,
I cannot set thee free ;
But I am come, alas ! to see thee hung,
All on this high gallows tree.’

Chorus.

‘O the prickly bush, the prickly bush,
It pricked my heart full sore ;
If ever I get out of the prickly bush,
I’ll never get in any more.’

‘O hangman, hold thy hand,’ he cried,
‘O hold thy hand awhile ;
For I can see my own dear love,
Coming over yonder stile.’

‘O sweetheart, have you brought me gold ?
Or will you set me free ;
Or be you come to see me hung,
All on this high gallows tree ?’

‘Yes, I have brought thee gold,’ she cried,
‘And I will set thee free ;
And I come, but not to see thee hung,
All on this high gallows tree.’

Chorus.

‘O the prickly bush, the prickly bush,
It pricked my heart full sore ;
And now I’ve got out of the prickly bush,
I’ll never get in any more.’

It was, perhaps, not unnatural that he should dream of his own execution, and of Audrey arriving just in time to stay the hangman’s hand, and bid them take the rope from about his neck; but just at the supreme moment of rapture and relief as he caught her to his breast some noise roused him, and he started up to find himself in a strange bedroom, with half a yard of chain connecting the iron fetters on his wrists, and with Captain Plummer snoring loudly from behind the curtains of the second bed. The return to reality felt somewhat dreary, but nevertheless there was the letter still clasped fast in his right hand; the grey light of early morning stole in, moreover, through the white dimity curtains, and raising himself on his elbow, he broke the seal and read very eagerly the words which Audrey had written in such haste on the previous day. The letter was full of eager sympathy and anxiety on his behalf, but dared he hope that she really loved him? He read and re-read it half a dozen times; it was frank, friendly, and affectionate, but he could not flatter himself that there was a word in it which she might not have written to him in his Cambridge days, before any thought of love had entered her heart.

His spirits sank yet lower when at Knaresborough he learnt from Zinogle that young Mr. Salkeld had ridden up to Stable Hills Farm just as he left. And the most

dismal visions of Audrey being won over by Father Noel's arguments to the Romish Church, began to haunt him, while he could readily understand how Sir Nicholas would hail the idea of a marriage which would promptly silence the unkind talk of the neighbourhood with regard to Audrey's escapade as the Borrowdale Bogle. Curiously enough, the only thing that seemed to cheer him was the strange, weird ballad of *The Prickly Bush*, for this was for ever associated with his dream at Appleby, and every night Zinogle used to sing it, to the great satisfaction of all his hearers, accompanying it on his fiddle in a fashion wholly his own.

At length London was reached, and on a sultry evening towards the end of August, Zinogle took leave of his fellow travellers, and having learnt that Michael was to be taken to the Tower, repaired to the Blue Boar, in Holborn, where Firefly could rest her weary bones after the week's journey, and where the fiddler found a rest in one of the upper dormitories.

The next morning, as soon as he deemed it possible to go to the house in Norfolk Street, he delivered Audrey's letter and asked to wait for a reply.

The old butler seemed somewhat puzzled by his strange appearance.

'Mistress Denham only returned yesterday from Katterham,' he said, and after some hesitation he bade Zinogle to wait in the very room to which Michael and Lord Downshire's chaplain had once been relegated.

'There be a strange-looking old man, mistress,' he announced, 'awaiting for an answer to this letter,' and he crossed the withdrawing-room, where Mary sat working at the household accounts.

She put down her pen, and breaking the seal, looked with some surprise at the signature, then with keen interest read Audrey's appeal for help and counsel. Having ended it, she sat musing for some minutes,

wondering how she could best help these lovers, and seeing clearly enough how difficult was the girl's position.

'Uncle and Aunt Denham are at Dr. Martin Lister's, and will not be home till four o'clock; there is no possibility of consulting them,' she reflected. 'I must somehow get an order to see Mr. Michael Radcliffe in the Tower, but I don't know whom to ask. Perhaps the Wharncliffes will know; I will call and see them; and since this messenger of Mistress Radcliffe's is a respectable old man, he will do as escort. I need not trouble to take Anne with me.'

Hastily dressing, she went downstairs and began to question Zinogle a little as to what had passed at Keswick. And still talking over the strange events of the summer, they made their way to Mr. Wharncliffe's house, which stood in a pleasant walled garden in Drury Lane.

It chanced that both he and his wife were on the lawn at the back of the house, and Mary left Zinogle to wait within and, joining them beneath the mulberry tree from which they were gathering the fruit, told them her errand.

'I can, you see, do nothing until I have seen Mr. Michael Radcliffe,' she said. 'And I thought you would know to whom I ought to apply.'

'Why, that is reversing matters strangely,' said Hugo Wharncliffe, laughing. ''Tis you, Mary, who knew so well how to get into a prison, and how to manage matters in the best possible way with hard-hearted gaolers.'

She laughed.

''Twas easy enough to get into Newgate,' she said. 'But I have a notion that for the Tower a special order is needed.'

'True, I believe you have to apply to the Secretary of State. But, then, since my Lord Shrewsbury resigned

office in the summer, no fresh secretary has been appointed in his place. He, no doubt, would have been the man. I should think the best way now would be to go to my Lord Nottingham, and ask him to give you a letter to the lieutenant of the Tower.'

'You will have to assure him that you don't mean to aid and abet the prisoner's escape,' said Mrs. Wharncliffe, smiling.

'Apparently that is what Mr. Radcliffe himself is in prison for,' said Mary. 'And, then, to make matters worse, of course, he has a love story, which in his absence is likely to get into a hopeless tangle.'

'I will see my Lord Nottingham, and do my best to get a letter for you,' said Hugo Wharncliffe. 'By the time you and Joyce have gathered the mulberries and thoroughly settled this north-country romance, I shall be back again. Perhaps the old messenger had best come with me. What a brow the man has! He looks like a musician.'

'I must come and see him,' said Joyce, thinking little enough about Zinogle, but as usual following her husband to the door, loth to lose him even for the shortest time.

'Don't you remember, Mary,' she said, rejoining her friend presently under the mulberry tree, 'how last November, at Whitehall, Mr. Calverley, as we then called him, spoke of this grievance of Michael Derwent's, and said it was some unlucky love story? Oh, how I hope that you will be able to set things right for them, as you did for us; that you will make two other people as happy, if possible, as we are!'

'It seems to me that Mistress Radcliffe had far best come to the south herself,' said Mary. 'Clearly she longs to do that, and if the case comes on for trial her evidence is very important. Well, it will be easier to judge after seeing the prisoner. Poor fellow, I fear he

will not be so patient as Hugo was; he is of a different temperament, and with a good deal of the hot-blooded Welshman in him, I should fancy. It seems to me very strange that this Mr. Brownrigg could mistake his father for him. As far as I can recollect, Mr. Calverley did not in the least resemble him. Old Zinogle, the messenger, says their voices were exactly alike, however, and their height and figure the same. Perhaps, after all, in the twilight and with the change of perukes, it was not so unnatural.'

They were still talking of the Cumberland romance as Hugo Wharncliffe had prophesied, when, in an hour's time, he returned.

'Here is your letter from Lord Nottingham,' he said, smiling. 'Give that to my Lord Lucas at the Tower, and you will be admitted as often as you please to see Mr. Michael Radcliffe. His case is being inquired into. It seems that the government have been privately notified that he is much embroiled with the Jacobite plotters. I fear the fellow was rash when he was here last winter and in the spring.'

'Did you hear Mr. Brownrigg's name mentioned?' asked Mary.

'No, but my Lord Nottingham said something of evidence against him having been gained from a well-known young Jacobite named Enderby, who says he met him in June, just after the King went to Ireland; that he is ready to swear that he was not only in conclave with Calverley and Father Sharp, but that a lemon-letter was actually being written in the room under his very eyes.'

'And I am prepared to swear that only just before Michael Derwent and Sir Wilfrid left us in the summer, he had heard nothing at all of such things as lemon-letters,' said Mary, 'for I remember how much surprised he was when I told him about the ones that were so

much perplexing the Queen. He had never heard, then, of lemon-juice being used for secret correspondence.'

'Enderby is a featherpate and a chatterbox, but I believe him to be honest,' said Hugo Wharncliffe. 'Try if you can't get the matter explained by Michael Radcliffe, for when the case comes on, it is sure to be used against him. Don't hasten off yet; I have left the old fiddler having a crack with Jeremiah over a tankard of home-brewed.'

'And it is high time we all had our noonings,' said Joyce. 'I will bring curds and cream, and we can eat them with the mulberries. Take Mary to see the roses, meanwhile.'

'To be sure,' said Hugo, leading the way to a path at the side of the garden, 'and you must see too how well the shrubs Mr. Evelyn sent me from Wotton are thriving. And, by the bye, you must not forget to wear a flower of some sort when you visit the prisoner; that was ever part of the programme. Don't you remember how, all through that winter, when you came to see me in Newgate, you contrived to wear either flowers or bright berries?'

'Ay, and at Christmas, having with great care put on the best sprig of holly to be found, I learnt that it did but remind you of the walk to Tyburn,' said Mary, smiling, yet with a little choking in her throat, nevertheless, as she thought of those dark days. 'As for the flowers, Lady Temple had given me the free run of her greenhouses at Battersea, and I used to ransack them till the gardener grew to hate me for stealing his best blooms.'

'Is Lady Temple at Moor Park now?' asked Hugo Wharncliffe, thoughtfully.

'No, she is in town for the sake of being near the Queen while the King is in Ireland.'

'It only struck me that, if private help is to get Mr.

Michael Radcliffe out of his predicament, Lady Temple would be the best person living to give advice and aid.'

'True, that is well thought of, Hugo. She hath great influence with the Queen, and since the sad death of her son, the Queen's friendship for her has been stronger than ever.'

'The son was her last living child, was he not?'

'Yes, and of course the shock of his sudden death was terrible. But I think Lady Temple is one of those that try to make the outer world the richer when their private world has been bereaved. She will be sure to interest herself in such a case as this of Michael Radcliffe.'

'And you, Mary, will, I very well know, hold a brief for his lady-love. By the bye, what is her name?'

'Mistress Audrey Radcliffe; he is her first cousin, once removed. But as a matter of fact, they have only lately known that there was any kinship betwixt them, for his father only owned him at the moment of their arrest.'

Hugo Wharncliffe plucked the sweetest roses he could find for her, and then, while they sat under the tree, over their noonings, which Joyce had fetched on a dainty silver tray, old Jeremiah, the servant, went to fetch a sedan chair, in which Mary was carried to the Tower.

'Don't forget to come and play your fiddle to me this evening,' said the master of the house to old Zinogle as he trotted off in the wake of the chair.

'Ay, ay, sir,' said the fiddler. 'I'll sing you the ballad of *The Prickly Bush*. And I hope and trust the lady will contrive to get Mr. Radcliffe out of this prickly bush he's got himself into.'

Hugo Wharncliffe smiled as he closed the garden door, and slipped his arm round his wife.

‘Mary will get him out if anyone can,’ he said. ‘She has been helping unlucky folk out of the prickles of life for the last seven years.’

‘Yes,’ said his wife. ‘Somehow it always seems to me that she has begun her heaven down here.’

CHAPTER XXXV

JOYCE WHARNCLIFFE'S words were very true, and Mary Denham was always singularly happy when with the two whose happiness had been made out of the sorrow of her own girlhood. Nevertheless, as was but natural, her life was often lonely and anxious, for no one can go about helping, as Hugo expressed it, unlucky folk out of the prickles of life without wounding their own hands in the process.

She had inherited, moreover, from her father—a cavalier of the type of Lord Falkland—a love of peace, and a craving for perfect freedom of religious thought, which, even in the more tolerant days in which she lived, made perfect satisfaction impossible; while from her mother, whose childhood had been spent under a harsh and unloving *régime*, she had inherited a certain wistfulness of temperament, not amounting to melancholy, yet disposing her always to see the pathetic side of life.

And thus it happened that as she was carried beneath Temple Bar she shuddered at the ghastly row of heads set on poles, above the gateway, though most people had become perfectly callous to the familiar sight; and that, as her chairmen elbowed their way between the houses and the row of posts, which formed the only protection for chairs and foot passengers from the wheel traffic of the crowded city streets, she failed to get much diversion from the amusing sights that were not lacking, and was keenly alive to the misery

and the selfish greed and the sin that were all too visible.

When they had passed St. Paul's churchyard, she drew Audrey's letter from her pocket and read it carefully for the third time, wondering much how she had best set to work at the difficult task intrusted to her. Fortunately, she was the last woman to be daunted by the hardness of a task; she had long ago learnt to grasp her nettle, and Michael and Audrey could not have found a better champion. It was in this curious mingling of strength and a most womanly gentleness that her charm, and the secret of her influence, lay.

Her eyes filled with tears when, as the chair was carried across Tower Hill, she saw from the window the very place where, seven years before, she had seen Algernon Sydney butchered. How vividly the scene still lingered in her memory! Every tiniest detail seemed burnt in upon her brain: the vast throng of people, the cold, clear light of the December morning, the black scaffold, the grumbling executioner, who had asked for more than three guineas, because, forsooth, the patriot was of noble birth! And then—amid all the ghastly surroundings—the death that was like a triumph, the serene composure of the victim as he handed to his faithful servant the letter for Hugo, his watch for another friend, then knelt to say that ‘prayer as short as a grace,’ with which he commended his soul to God. Almost she seemed still to see him lying there with his head on the block, quitting the world with a smile and a pleasantry on his lips. For the executioner, anxious to know whether the victim had settled himself or meant to move any more, had cried out, with the axe poised in the air:

‘Are you ready, sir? Will you rise again?’

And Mary had heard the reply in the clear, firm voice she knew so well:

‘Not till the general resurrection. Strike on!’

Alone he had lived—for God and the people—and alone—save for God and the people—he had died.

Arriving now at the lion’s gate, braced up for the present effort for justice by the remembrance of the dead patriot, she handed her letter for Lord Lucas to one of the picturesquely clad warders, and was admitted with old Zinogle as her attendant.

It was one thing to come to the Tower as a pastime to see the lions, and quite another to pass under the grim gateway of Middle Tower and Byward Tower to visit a prisoner. Involuntarily she shivered at the gaunt greyness of the place. Up to the left, pigeons were wheeling and circling happily about the massive White Tower with its turrets and its hidden torture chambers, where in the past so many hundreds had suffered; while close to the path along which she walked rose the solid old Bell Tower, from which the curfew was rung, and within whose walls poor Lady Arabella Stuart had languished.

Mary turned to the warder with a question:

‘Where is Mr. Radcliffe confined?’

‘He be in the Bloody Tower,’ said the man. ‘Up yonder is his window,’ and he pointed to a small, late-Norman lattice, immediately facing Traitors’ Gate.

‘Why, that was Colonel Algernon Sydney’s room,’ said Mary.

‘Yes, mistress,’ replied the warder. ‘This way, if you please.’

And he led them up a dark, winding staircase, and unlocked the door of a narrow cell, measuring about twelve feet by four feet.

Mary saw that the prisoner was seated with his back to them, on an oaken bench. He was hard at work writing, and his inkhorn and papers were on the deep, splayed window-seat. Glancing round to see who was

entering, he sprang to his feet at sight of her, and came forward with eager words of greeting and thanks.

‘This is good of you, indeed,’ he said. ‘I never thought Zinogle would have gone to seek you and to tell you of my misfortunes.’

‘’Twas no doing of mine, sir,’ said the old fiddler; ‘I was but a messenger. However, I will leave Mistress Denham to explain that to ye, and will have a crack with the gentleman in the parti-coloured raiment outside.’

‘Go and have a tankard of ale with him,’ suggested Michael, ‘and bid him set it to my account. Drink to my speedy release, Zinogle.’

‘Well,’ said the fiddler, mopping his huge forehead, ‘I won’t deny but it’s hot work walking through the streets o’ London the first week in September. Many a time I wished myself back in the north country.’

And he strolled off, humming the tune of *The Oak and the Ash and the Bonny Ivy Tree*.

Mary, who all this time had been quietly observing the narrow cell and its occupant, could not help rejoicing to see how greatly the events of the summer had changed Michael. When she had last seen him, early in June, he had borne the look of one who struggles bravely on, trying his best to do his duty, but finding it uphill work.

Now, on this September morning, although he was a prisoner in the grim old Tower, and well knew that his worst enemy was plotting his destruction, there was an air of hope and brightness about him which she had never before seen.

‘I think,’ she said, merrily, ‘you are like King William. He looks sadly bored at court, but on the battlefield they say he is as cheery and full of high spirits as can be. You are far more cheerful-looking to-day than when you were with us in Norfolk Street.’

‘It is because I have once more something to hope for,’ he said. ‘You remember how I told you of my love to Audrey Radcliffe? Well, thank heaven, her betrothal to the Under-Sheriff is at an end, and I have been fool enough to dream that she might, one day, be my wife. Do you think the hope was too audacious?’

‘No, indeed,’ she said, gently. ‘I think it would be very natural that, having been wholly deceived in Mr. Brownrigg, having discovered in time that he was utterly unworthy of the trust she had reposed in him, her heart should instinctively turn to the man who has so long loved her in vain.’

‘If I only dared be certain that my hopes were well founded,’ said Michael, pacing up and down the cell restlessly. ‘You don’t know what it was to pass actually within sight of Lord’s Island last week and never to be able to see her.’

‘You did not quite understand what Zinogle meant just now,’ said Mary Denham. ‘He said he had come to me only as a messenger. It was as Mistress Radcliffe’s messenger that he came. She has done me the greatest honour one woman can show to another, and being unable to meet you, and hear from your own lips what you would fain say, has asked me to see you and make you understand all that she cannot write in reply to your letter. Sir,’ she smiled with a certain sweet archness which for a moment brought back the youth to her face, ‘I do not think you need trouble any more about the audacity of your hope. Your lady has wakened from a bad dream, and has learnt to look favourably on your suit.’

‘What does she say? What does she say in your letter?’ he asked, breathlessly.

And Mary, after a moment’s consideration, put the letter into his hands, feeling that Audrey’s own words would best reveal her heart to her lover.

Michael caught at the sheet eagerly, and unfolding it, crossed the cell to the one small window, that he might the better see to read it. When he again turned towards her he looked radiant, and Mary could not but reflect that so happy a face could seldom have been seen within prison walls.

‘That is well,’ she said. ‘I am sure, now, that you understand her.’

‘There is only one thing left to trouble me,’ he said, sitting down beside her. ‘Zinogle met young Mr. Salkeld, one of her suitors, on his way to visit Lord’s Island, and that means, I very well know, that her grandfather and Father Noel will be doing their utmost to persuade Audrey to accept him. He is rich, a Papist, and a very pleasant, good-hearted fellow. And you can guess how hard it will be for a girl to keep her head clear when such a kindly and clever priest as Father Noel does his utmost to entangle her in argument.’

‘True, that is a real danger,’ said Mary, thoughtfully, ‘specially after the shock of all she has been through, and the bigotry of Mr. Brownrigg; but don’t you see from this letter how greatly she longs to come to London? And, indeed, I think her evidence will certainly be needed.’

‘No, no,’ said Michael; ‘think of that long journey with all its dangers! And what could she do alone in London? Had her grandfather been fit to escort her, it might have been different, but he is an infirm, old man.’

‘As I came here,’ said Mary, ‘a plan came into my head. How do you think it would be if I went up to the north myself and brought her back with me?’

‘It would be heaven to see her,’ said Michael. ‘But the dangers of the journey would be as great for you, to say nothing of all the fatigue. ’Tis kind and thoughtful, like all your plans, but——’

‘Oh! as for me, I am a well-seasoned traveller,’ said Mary, laughing, ‘and quite of an age to play duenna to Mistress Audrey Radcliffe. Moreover, it happens that my cousin Rupert and his wife are staying with kinsfolk in York, and I think, for the sake of helping me, Rupert would very likely consent to ride with me to Keswick. With him, and with old Zinogle, and my own old groom, who knows the road well, we shall be able to brave a few difficulties and dangers. There can be no doubt, from this letter, that Mistress Audrey longs to come, and her coming is only wise and right, for she did involve you first in this affair, and is the only one who can bear evidence at your trial. By the bye, Mr. Wharncliffe tells me that a young Jacobite gentleman named Enderby vowed you knew in June of the lemon-letters that were intercepted and brought to the Queen.’

‘You yourself were the first to tell me of the letters,’ said Michael. ‘But he is so far right that, on the very night before you mentioned the matter to me, Enderby came into my father’s rooms in Villiers Street and spoke of the lemon on the table, as though it were a sign that he might freely discuss his journey to St. Germain. I puzzled much over the meaning of his words, and, of course, guessed that all three gentlemen were plotting King James’ return, but you know the air was thick just then with rumours of plots, and I did not feel bound to reveal to anyone words accidentally heard while on a friendly visit.’

‘I knew you would be able to explain the matter,’ said Mary, cheerfully. ‘It is clear that Mr. Brownrigg is secretly trying to poison the minds of those in authority with regard to your case, but we will outwit him yet. I think, however, it will be best to do things as quickly as possible, and if I can arrange matters at home with my uncle and aunt I will set off for the north to-morrow or the next day. So if you do not see

me or hear from me for the next three weeks, you will understand that I am on the Great North road.'

Michael could only reiterate his thanks, realising afresh how bright a day it had been in his life's calendar when he first met Mistress Denham in her primrose-satin gown.

'Are you well supplied with all you need?' she inquired.

'Yes, save with patience,' he said, smiling. 'The days will seem age-long till you return.'

'I will write a few lines to Mr. Evelyn, and ask him to visit you,' she replied. 'He comes to the Tower occasionally to see my Lord Clarendon. I hear there is a rumour that he is to be released on bail before long.'

'Perhaps you would also lend me a few books,' said Michael. 'I try to while away the time with writing down my recollections, but 'tis no easy matter to write in gaol. Methinks other men's thoughts pass the time better.'

Mary promised to send him her copy of Spenser's *Faerie Queen*, and whatever other volumes she could lay hands on, and having called in Zinogle to discuss the likelihood of Firefly's having recovered enough from her long journey to return the next day, she bade the prisoner farewell, leaving him in the best of spirits, and purposely forgetting to take away with her Audrey's letter.

CHAPTER XXXVI

WHEN Mistress Mary Denham once took a matter in hand she had a fashion of carrying it through at all costs, and spite of the unusually cold and stormy weather, which just then set in most unseasonably, she journeyed to the north and allowed neither wind nor rain nor bad roads to check her undertaking. They were forced, however, to sleep at Penrith instead of pressing on during the last day to Keswick, as she had intended, and when the kindly landlady of the inn helped her out of her dripping clothes, she was fain to confess that she was tired out.

A night's rest soon restored her, and, fortunately, the weather was, as the people expressed it, 'taking up' when she woke the next morning, eager to set forth on the last stage of the journey.

True, the sky was grey as they rode out of Penrith and looked back for a last glimpse of the Castle and of the old red sandstone church, but as they journeyed on past Blencathara the sun shone out brightly, and Rupert, who had done little but swear at the bad weather all the way from York, now became once more a good-natured and cheerful companion.

'Having dragged me against my will from the flesh-pots of Egypt, that is to say, of the Minster Yard, and done your best to drown me like all Pharaoh's army, you are now, it seems, bringing me to the land of milk and honey itself,' he said, laughing, as they made their way through the exquisite wooded glen through which the Greta flows towards Keswick.

And Mary thought he had not used over-strong language when, presently, a bend in the road brought them into sight of the little market town nestled on the shores of Derwentwater, with woods just mellowed by the touch of an early autumn, and mountains rising on every side as though to shelter this paradise from the rude outer world. They put up at the *Royal Oak*, and Zinogle went off at once to Lord's Island, bearing a letter to Audrey from Mistress Denham. As good fortune would have it, however, he had scarcely quitted the town, when, crossing the field from Friar's crag, he saw Audrey herself, with Kitty, her waiting maid, in attendance, bearing a basket of food and medicine for some invalid in Keswick.

'What, Zinogle!' she exclaimed, eagerly, hastening towards him as he dismounted. 'Are you back so soon? I had scarce looked for you yet.'

'I delivered your letter, mistress, and here is the answer,' said the fiddler, unable to resist the temptation of watching her face as she read the missive. Its surprised delight rewarded the good-hearted old fellow for all the toils he had undergone, and his broad face was one huge smile of satisfaction as she took his hand in hers.

'Dear old friend, how can I ever thank you for all you have done?' she exclaimed, her face aglow with hope. 'Now I must come straightway and see Mistress Denham, and you must come with me to make me known to her. Kitty, give me the basket, and do you lead the mare back to the stable. Poor Firefly! she will not give you much trouble, being so spent with all this long journey.'

So Zinogle turned back again to Keswick, and on the way answered Audrey's eager questions as to where he had overtaken Michael, how they had prospered on the road, what his prison was like, and so forth.

When, at length, they had reached the inn and were ushered by the landlady into a private parlour, she looked most eagerly into the face of the unknown friend who had ventured so much on her behalf and had responded so generously to her plea for help and counsel.

Although it was not yet the middle of September, Mary had ordered a fire to be kindled, for the day, though bright, was very cold; she was sitting close to the fender, shaking out the long black feathers of her riding hat, which had suffered a good deal from the heavy rains of the last week.

On hearing her visitor announced by the old fiddler, she rose quickly, and came forward with the most unceremonious and eager of greetings, which at once set Audrey at her ease and destroyed all her fears of the unknown fine lady from London. On her part, Mary Denham looked with keen interest at the girl who had claimed her help. Audrey, in her mourning attire, and with her wide grey eyes full of that unconscious appeal which one sees in the eyes of all who cannot put their trouble into words, instantly found a place in her heart. During the summer she had regained her health, and yet the delicate colour and the youthful *contour* of the face only seemed to make its wistful expression more marked.

Zinogle left them to a *tête-à-tête*, and sitting together by the hearth, they soon learnt to know each other, for the friendship that may need years to ripen during an uneventful period, springs up with the rapidity of Jonah's gourd when some crisis makes two people feel a real and instant need of each other.

'I think your wish to be in London is perfectly justified,' said Mary when she had told of her visit to the Tower. 'Michael shrank from the thought of such a journey for you, but was quite at ease when I proposed coming here with my cousin, Rupert Denham, to fetch

you. Then, if you will stay with us in Norfolk Street, I do not see that you need be exposed to any risk whatever. Of course, though, you will like to discuss matters with Sir Nicholas Radcliffe.'

'Yes, but my grandfather will not, I think, object,' said Audrey. 'I am now of age, and he knows that I shall never consent to change my faith or to wed Mr. Salkeld, for I told him so only yesterday, when some definite reply had to be made to his suit. That trouble is over; though you would scarce believe me, did I tell you all the arguings and reasonings we have had as to it. You see, it was Father Noel's great wish.'

'Yes, and a very natural wish on his part,' said Mary. 'Has he recovered from his lameness? Could you leave home now?'

'Yes, I am glad to say, he is walking about again, and will take good care of my grandfather while I am away. How can I ever thank you enough for coming here, all this long distance, and for making things so easy for me?'

'Oh, as to the travelling, I like that very well,' said Mary, unclasping a little ivory fruit-knife and beginning to curl her feathers. 'And for our return I hope the weather may be more propitious. Tell me, how soon could you be ready to start?'

'As soon as the groom will let Firefly travel again,' said Audrey, eagerly. 'The less time we lose the better, for I dread the Under-Sheriff's secret scheming.'

'Yes, there is no doubt that he is at work,' said Mary. 'When I left the Tower, I went to see the wife of Sir William Temple, a very dear old friend, who has been like a second mother to me. She is one of the wisest counsellors I know, and it chances that she has much influence with the Queen, for Sir William Temple was the English representative at The Hague years ago. Her idea is to discuss Mr. Michael Radcliffe's story with

her Majesty, and tell her the whole facts of the case. If it seems well she will arrange that you should see her Majesty, and yourself intercede for your lover, explaining how wholly free from blame he has been in this matter.'

'Oh!' cried Audrey, clasping her hands, 'if only I could do something for him! It has been so cruelly hard to wait here since he has been in prison, knowing all the time that it was my fault he was ever mixed up in the affair.'

'He would scarcely wish not to have been mixed up in it,' said Mary, smiling; 'for 'tis to the strange happenings of last July that he owes all his hope for the future. What a trying life his has been, and how curiously in the end the revelation of his parentage was made! By the bye, I should much like to see this Borrowdale of which he so often speaks; they tell me it is the most wild region in all England.'

She could not, however, be induced to come and stay in the Lord's Island mansion, knowing well that their arrival would perturb such a recluse as Sir Nicholas, and would be little convenient to the young mistress of the house just on the eve of her own departure.

Audrey induced her, however, to promise that both she and Mr. Rupert Denham would dine with them on the morrow, after which they might visit the dale and see the place where Sir Wilfrid Lawson had discovered Michael years ago. To everyone's relief, the meeting between Mistress Denham and Sir Nicholas passed off very happily. The old knight brightened visibly as she talked with him at dinner, and afterwards he even ventured out for a few minutes to pace with her up and down the pleasance, and to talk with her about his granddaughter's future.

'The maid will not hear of wedding the son of Sir Francis Salkeld, which has ever been my wish for her,'

he said. 'And the marriage of her mother's devising with the Under-Sheriff has, thank heaven, come to naught. No doubt, the happiest thing now will be for her to accept the suit of her cousin, and the sooner they are wedded the better. I shall raise no objection; indeed, I shall be glad to have her safeguarded from Mr. Brownrigg.'

Mary guessed that the disappointment was much keener to the old priest, and she could not help liking him, because she saw that, although he had been check-mated, he took his failure so well, and evidently had such real affection for both Michael and Audrey. He and Rupert Denham rowed the two ladies to Lowdore, and they walked to the waterfall in the glen behind the mill, that the visitors might see how fine it looked after the heavy rains.

'Come!' said Rupert, cheerfully; 'this well-nigh makes up for the soaking we got on the road'; and in his jovial fashion he began to make Audrey laugh by describing what he called the cavalcade of drowned rats which had halted two nights ago at Penrith.

As for Mary, she wandered on, under Father Noel's guidance, close to the fall, gazing at the wonderful mass of foaming water, and trying to realise that this incessant downpour had been falling, falling in snow-like whiteness ever since the days of Adam, and would continue long after she and all she loved had passed away. Never in her life had she seen anything that so impressed her as those towering, perpendicular crags on either side of the cascade, and in presence of this grand bit of nature, as in the realised presence of God, all the differences of opinion and practice faded away into insignificance, so that she forgot the points on which she and Father Noel differed, and only drew near to him in the far greater matters which they held in common.

By and bye, as they walked on to Borrowdale and

visited the place by the birch tree near the Derwent, where the Borrowdale foundling had been discovered, he talked to her long and earnestly as to the danger Michael stood in from a man of Henry Brownrigg's overbearing and unscrupulous character, strongly advising that if, as they hoped, Michael's release was obtained, and the matter never brought before the law courts, he and Audrey should be wedded with all possible speed that he might the better protect her.

They ended their expedition by a visit to Anne Fisher at Grange Farm, and Mary heard her description of the little foundling brought to her years ago by Sir Wilfrid Lawson; of how, from the first, they had been sure from the way in which it was clothed that it was of gentle birth, together with many details of Michael's childhood, over which the foster-mother quite forgot her northern reserve, and chatted in the raciest fashion. Nor was it possible to depress the good woman, for even after hearing of Michael's imprisonment in the Tower she was ready roundly to assert that before long they would have him in Borrowdale again, since all his life he had somehow contrived to conquer difficulties and win his way when things seemed most against him.

Her cheerful confidence comforted Audrey not a little, and carried her through the painful parting with her grandfather two days later.

It was arranged that they should only ride as far as York, after which the grooms should stable the horses in the city, leaving Mary Denham and Audrey to travel in the coach with Mrs. Rupert Denham to London.

To Audrey the journey seemed endless, but then she had never in her life travelled further than to Raby Castle. Fortunately, she was young and strong, and could stand a good deal of fatigue; moreover, her girlish devotion to Mistress Mary Denham made the intercourse of those days a keen delight, and when, on the Saturday

night, they reached York, both Mary and her cousin protested that she looked far too cheerful to play the part of a distressed damsel going to rescue her lover from prison.

After a Sunday's rest and a visit to the minster, they started off by the public coach early on Monday morning. It was anything but a comfortable mode of travelling, for they were pent up inside the springless vehicle which held six people and lumbered heavily along over the rough road, mercilessly jolting the occupants. However, since the rain was falling heavily, it was something to be under shelter, and Rupert Denham and his pretty wife Damaris proved very amusing companions, somewhat shocking two stately old gentlewomen who shared the coach, but eventually winning their hearts by their real good-nature.

London should have been reached on the fourth day, but owing to the rain, and to a slight accident to one of the horses, which hindered them between Huntingdon and Hatfield, they did not arrive until the Friday.

Mary looked a little anxiously at her charge, when, having dismounted from the coach, they drove in a hackney carriage from the inn to Norfolk Street. For Audrey, who had been so blithe and cheerful throughout the journey, seemed now, as they rattled over the paving stones in the crowded thoroughfares, to look worn and anxious. She could not have described the sense of deadly oppression that had stolen over her as she realised that in this city Henry Brownrigg was somewhere trying to weave a web of falsehoods which should entangle Michael and prove his ruin. Every moment she dreaded to see him, till at length she confided her secret terror to Mary, and was comforted by her quiet rejoinder.

'Oh, that is not at all likely to happen. There is nothing to make him expect your arrival, and you must

remember what a great place it is. You are not in the least likely to come across him.'

And yet, had they but known, even as she spoke these words, Henry Brownrigg, chancing to come out of the door of the *Rainbow Coffee House*, caught sight of Audrey, and amazed by so unexpected an apparition, followed the coach as it slowly made its way through Temple Bar and along the Strand, not resting until he had discovered the house at which it stopped in Norfolk Street.

A pastry cook's boy with a tray on his head had just left the door; he asked him the name of the owner of the house.

'Why, any fool knows that!' said the lad, saucily. 'Sir William Denham, to be sure, Mr. Countryman.'

Henry Brownrigg turned away with a frown to reflect on this new factor with which he had to reckon, and to arrange his plans, which now bid fair to be seriously complicated.

CHAPTER XXXVII

AUDREY was roused after a good night's sleep by the strange cries of the London streets; she lay dreamily wondering what in the world 'Colly Molly Puffe!' repeated again and again, could mean, until it died away in the distance and gave place to the more intelligible 'New River water! New River water!' This in its turn was succeeded by 'Remember the poor prisoners!' which completely roused her and made her jump out of bed and peep through the curtains. Down below in the street, with a large basket fastened to his back and a money-box in his hand, walked a thin scarecrow of a man, with an old, battered felt hat, a ragged coat, and knee-breeches tied with string. She guessed that he must be one of the prisoners from Ludgate or the Fleet, who were allowed to patrol the streets and beg for food or money, without which the poor wretches must have starved.

Her thoughts, naturally, flew to her own prisoner in the Tower, and hastily dressing, she joined Mary and Sir William Denham in the breakfast room, for it had been arranged on the previous night that Sir William, who wished to see Lord Torrington in the Tower, should accompany them.

It was, therefore, in the Denham coach that Audrey drove to visit her lover, and as they drew near to the Tower the colour in her sweet face rivalled the rose which Mary had pinned in her black dress. Here in this great gloomy place, which was not one tower, as

she had fancied, but a great collection of towers and gateways, protected by battlemented walls and portcullises, and by a vast moat which could be flooded if need arose, Michael was doomed to remain until the King and Queen had learnt the true facts of his case and had been persuaded to release him. Fortunately, she had absolute confidence in their justice, and her face was bright with hope as the warder led them up the winding stone stairs.

‘Mr. Radcliffe be taking his exercise on the leads,’ said the man. ‘Belike, since the cell is small, you would liefer see him up there.’

To this they gladly agreed, and as they emerged from the dark turret staircase on to the top of the Bloody Tower, Audrey saw her lover intently watching a great barge just passing by on the Thames. Her heart leapt within her when Michael came swiftly forward to greet them, his face radiant at sight of her. Then, after a few minutes’ general talk and many eager inquiries as to their journey, Sir William and Mary considerately went with the warder to call upon Lord Torrington, who, since the battle of Beachy Head, had been kept prisoner, and was awaiting his trial for his unworthy conduct on that disastrous day. As they disappeared down the staircase Audrey glanced half shyly round the battlemented roof.

‘They do not give you much space to walk in,’ she said, looking anxiously at him to see how he had stood the discomforts of prison life.

‘I have all I need,’ he said, lifting her hand to his lips. ‘The comfort I hungered for was brought me by Mistress Denham in the assurance of your love.’

‘Oh, Mic,’ she cried, her eyes filling with tears, ‘you will never know how sorely I longed to come with Zinogle. But I dared not; I feared it might do your

cause harm. And when I tried to write to you, somehow the words would not come.'

'My beloved!' he exclaimed, taking her in his arms, 'I hardly yet know how to believe that you indeed can care for me. I have loved you all my life, and when we were at Raby I dared to hope that you, too, cared. When that proved a vain dream——'

'Oh, hush!' she said. 'Do not make me think again of the mistake that has cost us all so much. I was deceived, and that night of the arrest would gladly have died. And yet, Mic, there was a worse time even than that. It was when I heard that you were dead, and for the first time understood all you were to me.'

'Did that make you care?' he exclaimed.

'It made me understand my own heart,' she replied, 'and for some days I had been learning to see what you really were. Oh, Mic! if you were but out of prison, all now would be well.'

'I scarcely think I am in prison just this minute,' he said, raining kisses on her face. 'As Colonel Lovelace sang:

"Stone walls do not a prison make
Nor iron bars a cage."

'Dost remember his lines?'

'Yes,' she said, humming the air softly. 'And yet, all the same, dear heart, I long to have you away from this grim prison.'

''Tis not half so cruel a place as I was in when last I heard you sing,' he said with a smile. 'Shall I ever forget that night when Father Noel forced me to come into the withdrawing-room while you were singing, "See the chariot at hand here of love"? ' Audrey clung to him more closely.

'Mic, it terrifies me,' she faltered, 'to think how little we really know what is going on all about us. I must

so often have hurt you, though I little dreamt it. And all round us people were scheming and plotting while everything seemed to me clear and simple. It frightens me now, for now truly we know that the Under-Sheriff is almost certainly planning your ruin.'

'The past should give you confidence,' he replied, cheerfully. 'See how all the plots have come to naught! Oh, we shall baffle them yet, I trust, and when I am free, why, then, Audrey, I will beg you to end this time of waiting and to be my wife at once. Then together we can journey back to the north country.'

'Indeed,' she said, blushing. 'Mistress Denham and my grandfather agreed that it would be the safest course. And next week I trust to have an interview with her Majesty, if it can be arranged.'

'Have you yet seen Lady Temple?'

'No, there is some idea that we shall see her after service at the Abbey to-morrow. She always goes there when at her house at Battersea, and Mary says I must tell her the whole tale, so that she may be able to interest the Queen.'

'Yet, if you drew a really truthful picture,' he said, beginning to laugh, 'her Majesty would scarce be moved to pity. For never, I am sure, was there in this Bloody Tower a more thoroughly happy man than I am. Think of the two little princes murdered here; of Sir Walter Raleigh, who spent one of his imprisonments in the room below; of Archbishop Laud, and of Algernon Sydney, who, from the very cell in which I sleep, went to the scaffold. Hark! I hear steps on the stairs; they have ended their visit to my Lord Torrington. Now comes the hard part of prison life—the parting from you!'

When the Denhams came out on the leads, the two lovers were standing sedately by the battlements, apparently studying the shipping on the river; but Mary

was quite at rest about them when they turned to inquire after Lord Torrington, for Audrey's happy face was crimson, and in Michael's eyes there was the light which is only seen in the eyes of an accepted lover.

They drove back to Norfolk Street in excellent spirits, and as they stepped from the coach, a poor old beggar, bent and crippled, held out his hand for alms; Audrey dropped a penny into it, being in her happiness very tender-hearted. But as they went upstairs Mary Denham warned her not to give to street beggars, since the London streets were full of impostors. As a matter of fact, the cripple became straight and alert directly he had reached the Strand, and in a wonderfully short space of time was making his way up the steep stairs of a house in a remote corner of the city.

Here he was admitted into the presence of no less a person than Mr. Under-Sheriff Brownrigg.

'I watched the house, sir,' he said, 'as you directed, and Sir William Denham, together with two ladies, drove to the Tower; they have now just returned.'

'Let me hear you describe the ladies,' said the Under-Sheriff, refilling his pipe.

'The elder, sir, might have been about thirty, had dark hair, and wore a large hat with curling feathers about the brim. The other was younger and fairer, and wore a mourning dress.'

'Good! that will do. Go early to-morrow and bring me word directly the two ladies go out. They will probably attend some church; find out which they go to, and come quickly and let me know.'

Accordingly, on Sunday morning, the beggar again stood in Norfolk Street and asked for alms as the ladies stepped into the coach.

This time, however, Audrey shook her head, remembering Mary's warning, and the spy, with an air of abject misery, stood whining by the carriage-door, listen-

ing intently, however, to Mistress Denham's directions to the footman.

'To the Abbey,' she said, and having seen the horses turned towards Westminster, the cripple cheerfully repaired to the city to receive the Under-Sheriff's pay, together with instructions to call the next morning at nine o'clock.

When the fellow had gone, Henry Brownrigg, completely transformed by a red wig and the attire of a London tradesman, repaired to Westminster Abbey, and with some difficulty succeeded in discovering Audrey's whereabouts. All through the sermon he watched her intently, and afterwards had the satisfaction of seeing her waiting about with her companion in the nave. He lingered as near them as he dared, and presently saw Mistress Denham speak to a very fine-looking old lady, dressed in deep mourning, who came down the steps out of the choir. Turning his back to them, he appeared to be closely studying the carving upon the screen, and fortune seemed to favour him, for, to escape the rest of the congregation as they filed down the steps, Mistress Denham moved further aside, so that he was well within earshot of the little group.

'Lady Temple,' he heard her say, 'I want to present to you my friend, Mistress Audrey Radcliffe. We wondered whether it would be convenient to you some day to have a talk with her.'

'By all means, my dear,' said a sweet, clear voice. 'Indeed, the less time we lose the better, for it is important that the Queen learns all as soon as possible. Come to my house in Battersea to-morrow afternoon at four o'clock. It is the only free afternoon this week.'

'Unfortunately, I have promised to drive with my aunt to Enfield Chase,' said Mary Denham. 'Yet it is important that no time be lost.'

'Yes,' said Lady Temple, 'especially as I shall wait

upon her Majesty on Tuesday. How would it be if Mistress Radcliffe came to my house in a chair? Then we could have a quiet talk together, and she could be back in Norfolk Street by the time you return from Enfield.'

'Should you mind that?' said Mary. 'You have probably never seen a sedan chair, but they are really very comfortable and will take you without any trouble, on your part, from house to house.'

'I should like to go in one,' said Audrey, who always enjoyed a novel experience.

So it was arranged that she should pay the visit, as Lady Temple suggested, and the three ladies walked down the nave together to the west door, leaving Henry Brownrigg to saunter slowly down the north aisle, cudgelling his brains as to the best way to defeat these womenfolk who were doing their best to free his rival.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

‘I TOLD Michael that the thought of all the plotting and scheming that had gone on in the past terrified me,’ said Audrey, the next day, as she sat in Mary Denham’s room, while her friend dressed for the expedition to Enfield Chase. ‘But now it seems to me that we are at an end of all the bad schemes, and everyone is only planning how to help us. How good it is of you and Lady Temple to take all this trouble for us!’

‘I am sure,’ said Mary, brightly, ‘that it is to Lady Temple, as it has been to me, nothing but a pleasure. I am glad, too, that you will be alone with her to-day; you will find it more easy to tell her all about the past. And, indeed, she will enjoy having you. You know she has lost her children, and I think the sight of you will be a great refreshment to her. At Moor Park she has the company of her widowed daughter-in-law and of her grandchildren, but here she is sad and lonely enough.’

Just then the maid came to announce that the coach was at the door, and Mary turned to give a farewell kiss to her guest.

‘I must not keep my aunt waiting,’ she said. ‘Thomas will see you safely into the chair, and will direct the men to Lady Temple’s house, and I dare say by the time you come back we shall have returned too. Good-bye, and good luck to you, dear.’

She ran downstairs, while Audrey retired to her own room and finished a letter to her grandfather, telling

him of her betrothal to Michael, describing their visit to the Tower, and telling him of the call she was about to pay. Then, at three o'clock, feeling very nervous at the prospect of her interview with Lady Temple, she went downstairs, and for the first time in her life got into a sedan chair. It had been carried into the hall, and the old butler was giving the chairmen directions as to the exact place in Battersea where the house stood. They said they knew it well, and Audrey for the time forgot her fears in the curious experience of having the lid put on to the box in which she was cooped, and in feeling the swaying movement of the chair as the bearers lifted it and trotted along the street. There was much to amuse her, moreover, in the crowded thoroughfares, which she could see through the windows as she was borne along, and to her country-bred eyes London seemed a most enchanting place. It was not until she was carried up the well-planted carriage drive which led to Sir William Temple's house at Battersea that she began to feel a little alarmed at the prospect of her interview, and her heart beat uncomfortably fast when the great doors were swung wide to allow her chairmen to enter and set down their burden in the great entrance hall.

She ordered them to return in half an hour, and they left the chair and went off, while Audrey was conducted by the butler through a stately withdrawing-room into a smaller room beyond, where she found Lady Temple seated at a reading-stand, whereon lay a volume called the *Story of China* by Fernando Mendez Pinto. At her feet lay a huge mastiff, who rose with his mistress to receive the visitor, and sniffed at her with approval as she curtsied low.

Lady Temple had the most charming manner, and speedily made her entirely at her ease. Her beautiful dark eyes grew soft and tender as the girl, little by little,

told the whole story of her betrothal to Henry Brownrigg and of the manner in which he had jilted her. It was easy enough to understand the rough awakening through which she had passed, and the revelation which had come to her when she imagined that Michael had been killed.

‘If, as seems likely,’ said Lady Temple, ‘Mr. Brownrigg is indeed in London and trying secretly to prejudice Mr. Michael Radcliffe’s case, he will at any rate be unable to appear openly, or he might be arrested for causing the death of your uncle in the duel.’

‘Yes, that is all clear gain to us,’ said Audrey. ‘He dare not show himself openly. Yet I fear he must still be doing his utmost to harm Michael, for otherwise people say he would never have been removed from Cockermouth, seeing how simple the case against him really is.’

‘You are ready to swear that he has no Jacobite leanings?’ said Lady Temple.

‘Yes, perfectly ready. Michael has ever been one of King William’s admirers, and though they tried their utmost to make a Papist of him they failed.’

‘To be sure, I recollect Mary Denham told me something of that. Well, I hope to see her Majesty at Kensington to-morrow and will tell her your story. May I mention that you are now betrothed to Mr. Michael Radcliffe?’

‘We were actually betrothed on Saturday,’ said Audrey, blushing rosy-red.

‘So much the better,’ said Lady Temple, smiling. ‘Her Majesty is a true woman and loves a romance. I shall tell her your tale, and try to get an audience for you with the King.’

‘With his Majesty!’ exclaimed Audrey, looking much alarmed at the prospect.

‘That would be by far the best plan,’ said Lady

Temple. 'And my dear, you need fear nothing. Though brusque of manner, his Majesty is just and tolerant; moreover, he is quick at reading character, and I think you would do well, if possible, to plead your lover's cause yourself.'

It was a formidable prospect for one so little versed in the ways of the world. Still, to be able to serve Michael was the keenest pleasure Audrey had known for many a day, and as she parted with her kindly hostess her spirits rose at the thought of the work before her.

'You think her Majesty will indeed give me audience?' she asked wistfully.

'I do not for a moment doubt it, my dear,' said Lady Temple, touched by the anxious expression of the sweet young face. 'The Queen has the kindest of hearts, and I have very little doubt that you will soon see Mr. Radcliffe set at liberty.'

The words and the kind, motherly look which went with them sent Audrey away with a heart full of gratitude and hope. As once more she stepped into her chair and was borne down the drive it seemed to her that their troubles were at length almost at an end, and she could have sung for sheer happiness as her bearers trotted along through the roads and lanes between Battersea and Southwark, for in those days London Bridge was the only one across the river.

All at once she was recalled from her pleasant imaginings by feeling that her men were slackening their pace. Looking out of the window, she saw that they were in a quiet lane and that the men were pausing before a lonely house standing in a walled garden.

To her amazement, their arrival seemed to be expected, for the door was flung open, and the men taking no heed whatever of her rapping on the window and calling out that they were taking her to the wrong

house, carried the chair right in and set it down in the lobby.

Then all at once she realised that, although a sedan chair may be a most comfortable convenience, it has one serious drawback: when once you are shut into it you are absolutely at the mercy of other people, and can by no possibility get free without help. All the tales she had ever heard of wicked cities and of luckless ladies decoyed into dangerous places, came suddenly back to her memory. Her sole hope seemed to be with the chairmen, for she had heard Mistress Denham specially order old Thomas to see that steady men they had employed before, were chosen.

‘Take me out,’ she cried. ‘Carry me to Norfolk Street, and Sir William Denham will reward you.’

And at that the bearers for an instant showed themselves at the window to shake their heads and reject the offer.

‘Doan’t be afraid, missus; you’re safe enough,’ said one; and Audrey, to her horror, noticed for the first time that they were not the men who had brought her, though they were dressed in precisely the same clothes.

It was but for a moment that she saw them; then they tramped across the lobby, and Audrey heard the opening and closing of the front door; after that an ominous silence reigned in the house.

The horror of this was almost more than she could endure. Covering her face with her hands, she tried desperately to think what she could do. Quiet as the place was, she could scarcely imagine it to be empty, for who had opened the door to them in that mysterious fashion as they entered? Would it be possible for her to break the glass of the window and crawl through the aperture? She glanced up to see how this plan would work, starting violently as she perceived a woman’s face looking in at her. Had it been a good face she would

have welcomed it, but it was as hard as a stone, and she knew that she need expect no help from the owner of that thin-lipped mouth and those steely eyes, with their subtle, crafty expression. She was horribly frightened, but some instinct made her conceal her fear. She rapped imperiously on the window.

‘Let me out!’ she said. ‘There is some mistake.’

‘I can’t let you out, mistress, until you give me your word you’ll go quietly upstairs. There is no one in the house, and you shall not come to any harm. I will explain everything to you upstairs.’

Audrey was silent for a minute. It was clearly impossible that she should remain boxed up in the chair; on the other hand, she dreaded the idea of going further from the front door. Still the idea of an explanation tempted her, and at length she consented to go.

The woman removed the top of the chair and set her free; then grasping her by the arm, led her swiftly up the uncarpeted staircase. The house seemed to be, as she said, quite uninhabited, and the rooms they passed by had no furniture in them. But when, at length, Audrey was led into one of the back rooms at the top of the fourth flight of stairs, she found that a small truckle-bed had been prepared, together with a few of the bare necessities of life.

‘Now explain things to me,’ she said breathlessly. ‘What do you mean by dragging me up here?’

‘I am but obeying my orders, mistress,’ said the woman in a surly tone. ‘I’ll bring you some supper anon. And belike you’ll find the explanation yonder.’

She pointed across the room to a small table on which lay a letter, and as Audrey hastily stepped forward and opened it her gaoler beat a retreat, locking and bolting the door on the outer side.

The letter bore neither address nor signature, but in spite of certain studied differences, Audrey was sure that

the writing was Henry Brownrigg's. She breathed more freely. Little as she had reason to trust him, she knew that there were certain things she need never fear from him. And the terror that had overwhelmed her when she first realised that she had been kidnapped and was utterly alone and helpless in this great city, gave place to calmer thoughts as she read the following lines:

‘Have no fear; you are perfectly safe in this house and no one will molest you. But you must remain a prisoner for the present until certain other plans have been successfully carried out.’

Clearly Henry had learnt of her visit to the Tower and feared that his efforts to criminate Michael would be checkmated. He had even perhaps learnt that she was to see the King and Queen, and had determined at all costs to prevent the interview from taking place.

Her brain reeled as she read the words over again: ‘You must remain a prisoner for the present.’

How long did he intend to keep her shut up in this awful solitude? And would he succeed in these other plans that he spoke of? They could only be plans to harm her lover, and the thought of her impotence to help, made her almost desperate. She rushed to the door, trying in vain to make the lock yield; she went back to the window, but escape from that seemed hopeless too, for it was high above the ground, and nothing was to be seen from it save a large ill-kept garden bounded by high red-brick walls and apparently given up chiefly to apple and pear trees, while beyond a few tall elms effectually shut out any distant view. Whereabouts she was she had no idea except that she recollected that they must still be on the Battersea side of the river. To all intents and purposes, she might have been in the heart of the desert, for no cry for help, no signal to any other human being was possible. From actual danger it might be true that she was safe enough,

but from the torture of loneliness and anxiety and utter helplessness there was no deliverance. Worn out with all she had endured, she threw herself on the bed in a passion of tears.

Michael, who would have been her natural deliverer, was himself fast in the Tower; Mary Denham and Lady Temple, with the kindest hearts in the world, could scarcely hope to trace out the conspiracy to which she had fallen a victim, for not only were they utterly in the dark as to Henry Brownrigg's whereabouts, but they did not even know him by sight. It seemed to her, as she lay there sobbing her heart out, that he might baffle them all with the greatest ease, and satisfy to the full his greed of vengeance, his cruel longing to pain his rival.

CHAPTER XXXIX

LADY DENHAM paid a longer visit to Enfield Chase than they had expected, so that it was already evening when they returned to Norfolk Street.

‘Mistress Radcliffe has returned, I suppose?’ said Mary to the old butler as she followed her aunt into the house.

‘Nay, mistress, I have been wondering to myself that she be as late as this,’ said Thomas, and he went out to gaze along the street for signs of the chair.

‘’Tis strange,’ said Mary. ‘Maybe, however, she is being kept to supper. I hope there has been no accident. Did she have steady chairmen?’

‘Yes, mistress, the two her ladyship always employs—respectable men enough.’

Mary looking somewhat anxious, began to climb the first flight of stairs, but paused at the sound of a thundering knock at the front door.

‘She must have come!’ she exclaimed, and hastened down once more, to find, however, no chair as she had expected, but two breathless and shamefaced men, who were incoherently gasping out inquiries.

‘The young lady—be she—come back?’

‘No,’ said Thomas. ‘What do you mean? Where is she?’

‘We carried her to Sir William Temple’s house and left the chair there at four o’clock,’ said the elder of the two men, mopping his red face. She bade us come again in half an hour, and we went to get a drink at

an alehouse hard by. There two fellows fell a-talking with us in a friendly way, and it's my belief they was wizards, for, somehow or other, Ben and me we both dropped off asleep, and the next thing we knows was that the wizards had swopped coats and hats with us, and was clean gone.'

'Did the people at the inn notice naught?' asked Mary.

'Nay, mistress, we was in the parlour alone, and the wench at the bar she said she thought they was just two chairmen agoin' away when they left the alehouse some two hours before. So off sets me and Ben to find the chair, but when we got to Sir William Temple's, why, they told us it had been gone these two hours with the young lady inside it, and the butler he told her ladyship, who bade us come back and tell you all as fast as we could.'

Mary had grown deadly pale; she instantly perceived that there must have been foul play somewhere, and the thought that she had perhaps only brought Audrey to London to expose her to greater dangers made her heart die within her.

'Sit down,' she said, motioning the men to a bench. 'I must tell Sir William Denham and see what can be done.'

It seemed, alas! that there was very little to do. Rupert Denham and Mary went with the men to the nearest magistrate, and there made their deposition as to Audrey's strange disappearance. The constables and the watchmen were ordered to do their utmost to trace out the miscreants who had drugged the chairmen, and next day all London rang with the story of the abduction of Mistress Audrey Radcliffe.

It was, however, only too easy in those days for people to disappear. The wretchedly insufficient supply of watchmen, the slowness of communication, the stupidity

of such constables as were specially employed to search for criminals, made many things possible in the seventeenth century which in modern times would be carried out with infinite difficulty, and almost certainly discovered before any length of time had elapsed. It was resolved that at all costs they must keep the news from Michael as long as possible, for, pent up in the Tower, Mary feared that such dreadful tidings would make him desperate. Each day they hoped to find Audrey, and beyond writing to Michael to ask him to set down on paper a full description of the Under-Sheriff to aid the authorities in their search, Mary held no communication with him.

Her request seemed to him natural enough, and he wrote the description as desired, deeming that she did not wish to trouble Audrey with questions as to the man who had jilted her. He was actually writing the details of Henry Brownrigg's height and appearance when, to his surprise, young Enderby the Jacobite was shown into his cell.

'Mr. Radcliffe,' he said, 'I chanced to be admitted to-day to see my Lord Clarendon, and I have leave to visit you also. I wish to let you know how deeply I regret that words spoken by me to a stranger while dining at Pontack's early in August should have been twisted into evidence against you. You will remember that we met last June in Villiers Street.'

'Yes,' said Michael, 'I recollect your coming in while I was calling on Mr. Calverley. I had then, of course, no notion that he was my father or that he was in communication with St. Germain's, and only gathered that last fact from the words you let fall.'

'Believe me,' said Enderby, 'I repeated the story just as it happened to this scoundrel, thinking him a friendly fellow and not dreaming that he had a spite against you. Then he goes to the authorities with a cock and bull

story of your having known all about the lemon-letters, and had the impudence to say I told him that was the case. I suppose he is this villainous Under-Sheriff Brownrigg who is in hiding for having killed your father?'

'There is Mr. Brownrigg's description. I have just been writing it,' said Michael, handing the paper to his visitor.

'Ay, he was a tall man, I remember, but he was wearing, if I recollect, an auburn peruke. The miscreant has now wholly disappeared, and God knows what he has done with your young kinswoman. It must be hard for you to be a prisoner and unable to help in the search for her.'

Michael sprang to his feet; the blood rushed to his face.

'What do you mean?' he cried in a choked voice. 'For God's sake, tell me what has happened.'

'Have they not told you?' exclaimed Enderby, greatly dismayed. 'Why, Mistress Radcliffe was being carried back about five o'clock last Monday afternoon from my Lady Temple's house at Battersea in a chair, and it seems that the real chairmen were drugged while waiting for her, and some villains, probably in Mr. Brownrigg's pay 'tis thought, carried the chair off with the lady inside it and she has not yet been traced. 'Tis hard on you, locked up here, but—why, good Lord! my dear sir, I'm confoundedly sorry to have told you!'

For with the chattering voice of the Jacobite still pouring forth the words which wrung his heart, Michael suddenly reeled where he stood, and before his companion could steady him fell heavily to the ground in a swoon.

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When Audrey woke on the Tuesday morning to find herself a prisoner in the empty house, her heart was

heavy indeed. Yet, being young and vigorous, things did not look quite so hopeless to her as on the previous night. The darkness was over, no peril had come near her, and now the sun was shining. Moreover, she could hear on the stairs the voice of a child, and this cheered her more than any other sound could have done.

When the surly woman came later on with her breakfast, the little child strayed in after her, staring with all his eyes at the pretty lady who stood by the window. He must have been about five years old, and had a most friendly look in his blue eyes and chubby, round face.

Audrey held out her watch to entice him, and he was soon sitting on her knee, looking at the mysterious ticking clock, as he called it, contained in the little shagreen outer case.

‘Let him stay with me while I breakfast,’ she said, glancing at the woman.

‘Oh, if you like to be troubled with him,’ replied her gaoler with a shrug of the shoulders. But there was nevertheless a slight softening in her hard face as she glanced at the two. The child was very dear to her; he was also much in her way during the morning, so that she caught at once at a suggestion which meant pleasure for him and relief to herself.

It came about therefore that the long hours, which would otherwise have been intolerable to Audrey, were cheered by the presence of flaxen-haired Tim, who fell into the habit of coming in every day with her breakfast and again with her supper, and amused her not a little by his childish prattle.

When he was not with her she racked her brain to think of means of escaping from her prison-house. But it was not until the Thursday morning that an idea suddenly occurred to her. Then, as she sat musing sadly over the terrible trouble which she knew her absence must be causing to Mary Denham and to Michael,

something all at once reminded her of her visit to Carleton Manor and of the story of Lucy Carleton's leap from the window into the tree when she made her escape from home.

Alas! the only tree near this house grew far below her window, and by no possibility could she hope to reach it. But as she gazed sadly down into the tree so far below her she heard Tim's cheery little voice singing in the garden:

‘Cuckoo, cherry tree,
Catch a bird and give it me.
Let the tree be high or low,
Let it hail or rain or snow.’

Leaning out of the casement, she saw that he was skipping, and with the monotonous beat of the rope on the path, and the sound of the child's little feet, a thought suddenly darted into her mind. If she could only induce Tim to leave his skipping rope with her when he next came to pay her a visit, surely she might with its help reach the window below, and escape through the empty room she had seen as she came upstairs on the day of her arrival, letting herself out of the front door noiselessly while the woman of the house slept.

Her heart beat so fast at the mere thought of escape that she had much difficulty in calming herself enough to think out the details of her plan. More than once she had thought of climbing down from the window, but its height from the ground had always baffled her. Moreover, the woman had taken care to leave her nothing which could serve to help so perilous a descent; the sheets were mere rags and tore with a touch, while the small rug which served as a coverlet was far too thick and strong to be torn into lengths and used as a rope.

She knew that the woman was now in the adjoining

room in the front of the house, where apparently she and little Tim slept. It would therefore be well to seize the opportunity of speaking to the child in the garden, and leaning far out of the casement, she managed to attract his attention.

‘Are you coming up at supper time?’ she said.

‘Ay, mistress, I’m a-comin’,’ said Tim, kissing his fat little hand to this captive princess whom he had learnt to love.

‘Then bring your skipping rope to show me,’ she said, ‘and if you’ll put an apple in your pocket I will cut it into a well for you.’

The child nodded and ran off to choose the best wind-fall he could find in the grass. Audrey was in terror lest he should forget the rope, and she hardly knew how to contain herself for joy when at seven o’clock he trotted in after his mother as she brought the supper-tray, with his skipping rope tucked under his arm and a ruddy apple in his hand.

‘Now cut me the well,’ he pleaded. ‘I want to see how you make it into a well.’

‘Yes,’ said Audrey, ‘you shall see. But first you must help me to eat my supper.’ And the woman left them, as usual locking the door, and reminding Tim that she should come for him in half an hour.

‘Skip and show me how well you can do it while I spread you a piece of bread and butter,’ said Audrey.

And Tim obediently went through the performance, after which she gently took the rope from him and slipped it under her skirt while he was hungrily devouring the food she had prepared.

They chatted merrily throughout the meal, and she had just finished making his apple-well when his mother returned for the supper-tray.

‘Look!’ shouted Tim. ‘See what the lady’s made me,’ and he was so much enchanted with the novelty

of the hollow apple and the delightful little notches which fitted into each other so daintily that he forgot all about his skipping rope and went off to bed clasping his treasure, leaving Audrey a little sad at the thought that she had used him as her unconscious tool, and that if she succeeded in her escape she should never see the child again.

However, there was no time to be lost in regrets like these. She had to examine her rope carefully while the light lasted. Fortunately, it proved to be long and strong. Evidently it had been too long for little Tim, since in several places it had been knotted. And this reminded her that in the old days when Michael used to go after the eagles in Borrowdale, the rope by which he had been lowered had always had strong knots tied in it, and that knots would be the only means of preventing her too rapid descent. Even as it was, she knew well enough that the task would be a difficult one and that she ran great risk. Still anything seemed better to her than to allow Michael to remain any longer in the agonising state of suspense she knew he must be in. Having carefully tested each knot, she hid the rope in case the woman should again enter the room, and then began to examine the window. It was a fairly large casement, and the lattices swung back close to the wall, where they could be secured by iron hooks on each side. In the centre was an upright stone mullion. She tested it as well as she could, and thought that if the rope were securely fastened round it she might safely venture the descent to the window-sill of the room below. She took the precaution of opening the lattices and fastening them back at once, but dared not do anything further until night had come.

The hours of waiting seemed to her endless, but at last, to her intense relief, she heard the woman toiling up the long flights of stairs and shutting herself into the

adjoining room. Then, in a few minutes, silence reigned throughout the house. From time to time in the distance she could hear a church clock striking the hour, and not daring to let herself sleep, she sat waiting in an agony of impatience for the first tokens of dawn to show themselves in the sky. The waiting seemed so fearfully long that she began almost to fancy her sight must be failing. However, just as the church clock struck three a slight change became perceptible in the outer world. The air seemed to grow colder; away in the distance she heard the crowing of a cock, and a glimmering of light began to show itself in the sky.

Stealing gently to the window, she made her rope fast about the mullion, and with intense anxiety let it down.

The moment had come, and she scarcely knew whether delight that her waiting-time was over, or desperate anxiety as to the perilous descent, or the sheer terror of pursuit filled the largest place in her heart.

She swung herself noiselessly up to the window-sill, clinging with one hand to the mullion, and trying not to let her brain grow unsteady as she glanced down that giddy height. It was bad enough to sit there on the sill with her feet hanging in mid-air. What would it be when she was actually sliding down with nothing but a child's skipping rope to cling to?

‘Well, the longer I look at it the less I shall like it,’ she said to herself, drawing a deep breath. ‘Now! for the sake of freedom and Michael!’

And with that she bravely gripped the rope, and the next moment felt herself swaying out horribly into the dim space. The rope tore through her hands; she slid down, down, scraping against the wall of the house, till at length something touched her feet, and clutching desperately at the mullion of a window, she found

herself standing in safety on the broad window-sill of the room beneath, but so terribly giddy and shaken that for some moments she could only pant for breath, and cling with all her might to the friendly shelter of the window-frame.

At length a little recovered, she bethought her of the next step in her escape. She had hoped to find the window open, or at any rate to be able to loosen the fastening from the outside. But, to her dismay, this proved to be impossible. She dared not make a noise, lest her gaoler should be roused and all her efforts to unfasten the casement proved unavailing.

‘I must do as Michael’s mother did and jump into the tree,’ she reflected. ‘From this lower window it may be just possible—nay, it *shall* be possible.’

The words of the child’s song floated through her mind, and with the courage born of love she forced herself to face round upon the window-sill, to stand upright, then to bend for that desperate jump which would mean safety or death.

‘I must see the King and Queen and tell them the truth,’ she reflected, ‘or Michael may be ruined.’

And as she sprang towards the cherry tree she seemed to hear Tim’s voice gaily singing:

‘Let the tree be high or low,
Let it hail or rain or snow.’

There was a crash as of a broken branch; then the next thing she knew was that she was clinging to a rugged and moss-grown old trunk, that her hair had caught in the branches above her, and that blood was trickling slowly down her hands and arms. To disengage herself and climb down from the tree was no difficult task to a country-bred girl. With a feeling of rapture she found herself safely on the wet grass, and

began hurriedly to walk down to the place where from her window she had seen the row of elm trees. Alas! to her dismay she found that the high wall bound the garden in this direction also, and that it must be scaled before she was really free. Moreover, it was a red-brick wall, not like the loose stone walls used in Borrowdale to fence the fields. She was an adept at climbing those, but to get over this much higher and more difficult one would tax all her powers. Luckily, in one corner she came upon an apple tree planted against it. And, to her delight, the thick, strong branches closely nailed up against the bricks proved almost as good as a ladder. Audrey climbed up to the top valiantly, then looked anxiously to see how she would fare on the other side. Beneath her there was a dusty road. Away in the distance she could see the chimneys of houses or cottages, and immediately opposite her was another red-brick wall, evidently bounding some other garden. There was no help for it; she must let herself down as well as she could and trust to reach the road without broken bones. Swinging herself over, she hung by her hands for a moment, then dropped, rolled over twice, struck her head against a stone in the road and lay there in the dust stunned.

She was roused in a few minutes by the heavy rumbling of wheels, but was still so dazed by her fall that she could not make up her mind to stir. Then the wheels stopped and footsteps drew near, at which she started up in sudden alarm. In the road she saw a market wagon laden with apples, and beside her, looking greatly perplexed, was a countryman in a smock frock and broad felt hat.

‘Art hurt, mistress?’ he said, glancing at her bleeding hands and torn dress.

‘Yes,’ she said faintly. ‘I have been carried off by two ruffians and have only escaped with great difficulty.’

Pray take me in your cart as far as Norfolk Street, and my friends will reward you.'

'Why, I'm but a wagoner, mistress, on my way to Covent Garden market; 'tis scarce a fit way for a lady like yourself to travel,' he said hesitatingly.

'Oh, it will do excellent well,' she said. 'Only let me take shelter in it at once, for I am in terror lest they follow me.'

'Never fear, mistress; I'll settle the man that tries to lay hands on ye,' said the sturdy countryman. And with that he helped her into the wagon and covered her with a great bit of sacking; then touching up his horses, drove on towards London, promising to set her down in Norfolk Street before he went to the market.

The wagon jolted and rumbled on over the rough roads, but Audrey thought it was the most blissful ride she had ever known, and she could have kissed the old driver when at length he lifted her down at the door of Sir William Denham's house. His loud knock at the door speedily brought—not the old serving-man, but Mistress Mary Denham herself to open it.

'Oh, my dear! my dear!' she cried, taking the girl in her arms. 'How thankful I am to see you safely back! We have been distracted about you. Are you indeed unharmed?'

'Quite,' said Audrey, clinging to her. 'And pray give this good countryman the reward he deserves, for without his help I should never have got here.'

'Ma'am,' said the old wagoner, 'I found her a-lying in the road as white as a broken lily, and right glad I am I chanced to be passing along to market. She must have climbed over the wall of the house that used to belong to old Squire Mallinder. It's been empty this year and more—Millbeck House, you know, ma'am, where the poor old gentleman was killed by his gardener.'

‘To be sure, I remember hearing of it,’ said Mary, and again warmly thanking the man for his help, she turned once more to Audrey as though loth to take her eyes off her now that at length she had come back to them.

CHAPTER XL

“You are sure no harm has befallen you?” she said anxiously, leading the girl to her room.

‘None,’ said Audrey, ‘but I have had a terrible fright.’

‘And you have hurt your hands and arms,’ said Mary. ‘You must let me bind them up for you.’

‘What I chiefly need is hot water for washing and fresh linen,’ said Audrey, laughing. ‘I have been shut up in one room ever since Monday. Oh, you don’t know what bliss it is to be free once more and to have you to talk to!’

Before long she was cosily ensconced in an armchair in Mary’s bedroom, telling her all that had happened, and every detail of the escape, while Mary heated her a cup of chocolate over a little spirit-lamp, listening very eagerly to her tale.

‘And how about Michael?’ she said when all was told. ‘I fear he has been sadly troubled about it.’

‘He has, indeed,’ said Mary, ‘but we contrived to keep it from him till yesterday. Then, to my dismay, who should call upon me but young Mr. Enderby, the Jacobite, reproaching himself terribly for having, while visiting Michael, let out the fact of your disappearance. He is a chatterbox and can never hold his tongue. I went at once to the Tower and found him in terrible distress; but don’t cry over it, dear heart, for is not his trouble happily ended? You shall see him yourself as soon as we can decently visit him.’

‘And you’ll not expect me ever again to get into a sedan chair,’ said Audrey, laughing through her tears. ‘I shall never forget the dreadful, helpless feeling of it.’

‘You shall have the family coach,’ said Mary, caressing her. ‘And we will first visit the Tower, and then go to see Lady Temple, for she has been sadly anxious about you. Indeed, dear, all London has been thinking of you, and her Majesty has herself more than once inquired whether there was no news yet as to your whereabouts.’

‘I told you,’ said Audrey, ‘that though the writing was in some ways unlike Henry Brownrigg’s on this scrap of paper, yet in one or two points it much resembles his; and what the old wagoner said as to the house confirms my thought that he planned it all. Millbeck is the name of the Brownrigg property near Keswick, and I know he has kinsfolk of the name of Mallinder. Doubtless he knew this house to be empty and deserted, and was easily able to use it for a prison for me.’

‘Well, do not let us talk any more just now,’ said Mary, ‘but try if you cannot rest for a while in my bed while I go down and tell my uncle the good news. See, I will draw the curtains, and after this long night of excitement and adventure you will surely sleep.’

Audrey protested, but nevertheless was soon sleeping soundly, nor did she stir till Mary came to her room at ten o’clock.

Waking then to find the gentle face and thoughtful brown eyes of her friend looking down on her, she suddenly wreathed her arms about Mary Denham’s neck, kissing her with an almost passionate devotion.

‘Oh, how good it is to wake and find you near me instead of waking in that dreadful room to the sight of that hard-looking hag! Had it not been for little Tim I think I should have lost my wits altogether.’

‘Poor child, you must indeed have had a terrible time,’ said Mary. ‘Are you really fit to come now to the Tower? If so, the coach is at the door and we had better dress.’

Audrey protested that she was fit for anything after the sleep she had had, and indeed excitement had brought a lovely glow of colour to her cheeks and had made her great grey eyes brighter than ever.

Mary, glancing at her as they were taken to Michael’s cell, thought she had never seen a lovelier face, and in truth there was a new beauty about it, for those anxious days had developed Audrey, bringing out all that was strong and noble in her character. It was arranged that she should linger a little behind on the stairs while Mary went to give Michael a word of preparation.

He started up eagerly as the door was opened, and she was grieved to see how wretched and haggard he looked, evidently having been unable to sleep since Enderby had brought him the bad news.

‘Have you heard anything of her?’ he asked, scarcely pausing to greet his visitor in his extreme anxiety.

‘Yes, we have,’ she said with a smile. ‘All is well, and you must brace yourself up to learn good news this time.’

‘Tell me quickly,’ he pleaded. ‘You are sure it is true, and that she is indeed unharmed?’

‘Quite sure. She will tell you all herself; she is here now, and only longing to see you.’

With that she summoned Audrey, hardly able to resist a smile when she saw that this couple, who had been betrothed but a week, were very much more like husband and wife than any lovers she had yet come across. Where were the stately forms and ceremonies habitual in those days? Where were the deferential modes of address? Clearly ‘Mic’ and Audrey had belonged to each other in truth ever since their cradle days in

Borrowdale. The formal and ill-omened betrothal to Henry Brownrigg, now happily at an end, had been but a brief and unhappy interlude, and the Jacobite plot, which had accomplished nothing else but trouble and vexation, might at least claim to have had its share in preventing what must have been a most miserable marriage.

‘Shall you think me very hard-hearted if I carry Audrey off now to see Lady Temple?’ said Mary when Michael had heard the story of the last few days.

‘Indeed,’ said Audrey, ‘it would be best for you, Mic, that we should lose no time. Mr. Brownrigg must by now have learnt of my escape, and we must not let him frustrate our plans any more.’

‘I will not say a word against your going if you will promise to run no further risks,’ said Michael. ‘You will be well on your guard now, and Mistress Denham will, I know, take every care of you.’

‘I don’t think I shall dare to let her out of my sight,’ said Mary, laughing, ‘and I will undertake that she shall never go out save in the coach and with a lacquey in attendance.’

They left the prisoner in excellent spirits, and crossing London Bridge with its quaint houses and shops, drove to Battersea to visit Lady Temple.

They found her just on the point of starting for Hampton Court, and her motherly reception of them and the intensity of her relief on finding that Audrey was safe and unhurt touched them both.

‘There is no time to be lost,’ she said in her sweet yet decided way. ‘You must both come with me now in my coach and we will, if possible, let the Queen hear Mistress Radcliffe’s tale from her own lips before the gossips have had time to take the flavour out of it.’

Mary reflected that they were scarcely in court attire, but she held her peace, knowing that Lady Temple had

special privileges owing to her long friendship with the Queen; and, after all, though her own dress was of the quietest and Audrey's betrayed tokens of its country origin, they were going on a matter of great urgency, and not to any court function.

'The Queen, moreover, is a true woman, and will be more interested in Audrey's bonny face and curious romance than in her garments,' she thought to herself, glancing to the other side of the coach, where Michael's *fiancée* sat lost in a happy dream of how she was about to rescue him from the grim old Tower where he had passed through so much.

It was about one o'clock when they reached the stately palace of Hampton Court. Lady Temple pointed out to them the turreted portion of the building, from the flagstaff of which the standard of England floated to show that the King and Queen were in residence.

'That is the banqueting room,' she said, 'and until the State apartments Sir Christopher Wren is building are finished it is the part of the palace chiefly in use. Her Majesty's rooms are in what they call the Water gallery, and the banqueting room communicates with the royal apartments by an underground passage.'

Lady Temple was expected, and telling her two companions to follow her, they were all ushered through the corridors and anterooms of the somewhat stiffly arranged palace to a chamber opening upon the garden, where they were received by Lady Derby, the Mistress of the Robes, and an old friend of Lady Temple's.

'I have ventured to bring with me the young north country lady that all London is talking of,' said Lady Temple, presenting Audrey to the countess. 'She hath most happily ended our anxieties by contriving a very brave escape from the place where she had been carried by the faithless chairmen. I am anxious that her

Majesty should learn the tale, if possible, from her own lips.'

'Her Majesty is in the garden with the King. She bade me bring you there as soon as you arrived,' said Lady Derby, glancing with interest at Audrey. 'You shall yourself propose to present Mistress Radcliffe, and meantime she and Mistress Denham will perhaps wait here while we learn the Queen's pleasure.'

'That will be an excellent plan,' said Lady Temple. 'There is, moreover, a petition from Mr. Michael Radcliffe, which we thought of asking her Majesty to lay before the King.'

The two ladies went into the garden, talking together, leaving Mary Denham and Audrey in some trepidation at the notion of perhaps seeing the King himself.

'I could wish you were not in black,' said Mary, 'for 'tis well known that his Majesty cannot endure mourning garments.'

'That is unlucky,' said Audrey, 'but who could have thought when we started this morning that we should be at Hampton Court in the afternoon! I am in black from head to foot, save for the red roses you gave me.'

'Ah, to be sure! our roses for the prisoner in the Tower; that is a happy thought,' said Mary, unpinning the ones she wore. 'I will fasten these in your hat, and you must wear this white lace handkerchief of mine, that will lighten the costume a good deal. Now, did ever two poor ladies come to court so ill prepared?'

Audrey protested against taking the lace and the flowers, but Mary was too intent on the need of conciliating the King and not offending his well-known taste to have a thought to spare for her own dress.

'There!' she said triumphantly, putting the last pin into the daintily arranged neckerchief. 'If his Majesty is not content with you now he will be hard to

please. I only hope Mr. Radcliffe's petition is well written and easy to decipher.'

'Oh, yes, Michael's handwriting was ever the clearest and best,' said his *fiancée*. 'I have no fears for that, but much as to my own way of presenting it.'

Before long Lady Derby returned and bade them come into the garden, as the Queen was anxious to see the heroine of so strange an adventure; at which saying Audrey could have found it in her heart to laugh, for it suddenly struck her that few girls had enjoyed the privilege of swinging from a rope and leaping into a tree in the early hours of the morning and being presented to a Queen in the afternoon.

'I am indeed something of a novelty,' she thought to herself with a little smile playing about her lips. And then, as they crossed the smooth-shaven lawn, once Wolsey's property, and which had been trodden by the Tudors and the Stuarts, and by Cromwell in the days of the Commonwealth, she suddenly perceived a little group of people standing near a fallen tree, the victim of that September gale which had tried Mistress Mary Denham so severely on her journey into Cumberland. It was an elm, but it had served its time and the wood had become old and decayed. In its place the gardeners were planting one of King William's favourite evergreens, and his Majesty was himself superintending the work, keenly interested in what was indeed one of his happiest hobbies.

Audrey could hardly have seen him at a better moment. When in the previous November Michael had seen him at Whitehall, he had felt a shock of disappointment, for a state ball always bored the King to distraction, and he invariably became stiff, taciturn, and morose-looking.

This morning he was in excellent spirits, and there was a delightful simplicity in his whole manner and

bearing, so that Audrey had to remind herself that this was indeed the hero of the Boyne, the soldier King, who was never so happy as in the thickest of the battle.

The Queen, who had been in close converse with him and with Lady Temple, received the two younger ladies very graciously, and Audrey was thinking so much of her betrothed in his dreary cell that she had no time to remember that this interview was in truth a great ordeal. She looked into the kindly eyes of the Queen and at the King's thoughtful but inscrutable face, and answered the questions they put to her like a child repeating the catechism, her big grey eyes a trifle wider open than usual, her head raised and a little thrown back, for the King and Queen were standing on rising ground.

'If only Audrey had on a pinafore she might very well stand for the picture of a child at school,' reflected Mary, amused and surprised by the girl's unconscious mien. 'Anything more innocently unabashed I never saw in all my life.'

Meanwhile the King and Queen had asked all about the events at Borrowdale, and had heard of the manner in which John Radcliffe had been killed, and of how Mr. Brownrigg had fled, as it was thought, to London; and having previously learned from Lady Temple of the rivalry between the Under-Sheriff and Michael Radcliffe, they were able to draw their own conclusions.

'Does Mr. Radcliffe swear that he knows nothing of the Jacobite conspiracy?' said the King, scanning the girl's face keenly and satisfied with its perfect truthfulness of expression.

'He swears, sire, that he knew naught, though he had heard the rumours current in London during the trial of Mr. Crone. He also, during his last interview in London with Mr. Calverley, chanced to see Mr. Enderby and could not help inferring that he was communicating with St. Germain's, after which he avoided Mr. Calver-

ley's society, nor once met him again until the night in Borrowdale when, under his true name of John Radcliffe, he met him in the cave above Lowdore.'

'Were you always present during the interviews he had with Mr. John Radcliffe?' asked the Queen, 'and can you recall any names that were mentioned betwixt them?'

'I was present each time, your Majesty, save at that last meeting when they changed clothes on the night my uncle was killed,' said Audrey. 'And as to names, I am sure that none were mentioned. We spoke merely of the way in which my uncle could escape from the neighbourhood and take ship at Workington or Whitehaven.'

'That tallies with what Mr. Michael Radcliffe said in answer to the questions put to him on his arrival at the Tower,' said the Queen. 'He swore he had never heard of Nevill Payne, nor of my Lord Annandale, nor Sir James Montgomery.'

'Yet it is plainly proved that Mr. John Radcliffe was in their counsels,' said the King thoughtfully. 'Still, 'tis like enough he held his tongue while he was in Cumberland, where I gather he met with no encouragement even from the Catholics.'

He again relapsed into silence, and once more glanced through Michael's petition, while Audrey waited with breathless anxiety, not daring to watch his face while he read, but looking in a vague way at the figures of some of the Queen's Dutch ladies as they paced to and fro under the shade of the fast-thinning elms and the chestnuts with their golden autumn foliage in what the English people had lately dubbed 'Frow Walk.'

'I' faith, 'tis an honest enough petition,' exclaimed the King at length. 'It seems to me that Mr. Michael Radcliffe hath had hard usage; nor am I inclined to blame him for the part he played in trying to get his

father out of the kingdom. Methinks love of a lady had more to do with it than politics.'

The Queen laughed merrily, finding in this north country love-tale a curious relief, for she had been sorely burdened during the King's absence with the difficult task of unravelling the plot concocted by Lord Annandale and his accomplices.

'Then, sire,' she said, 'it were surely the best plan to hand over the prisoner to a more gentle gaoler than my Lord Lucas. If, as it seems, love of a lady led Mr. Michael Radcliffe into this escapade and has kept him nigh upon three months in durance, let the lady's love rescue him, for methinks she has played her part right bravely, and hath suffered not a little.'

The King smiled one of those rare smiles which, illumining a sombre and harsh-featured face, seem like a sudden revelation of the divine in man.

He turned to his Gentleman-Usher, Sir Thomas Duppa, and bade him fetch writing materials; then, while the Queen once more questioned Audrey as to her escape that morning, he became engrossed in the tree-planting, forgetting for the time all affairs of state, or that such things as plots and prisoners existed.

Mary Denham had no fears now as to the result of the interview, and rejoiced in the thought that her daring suggestion of fetching Audrey from the north had been justified. With a gleam of quiet humour in her eyes, she watched the extremely stately way in which Sir Thomas Duppa crossed the lawn carrying the King's pen, while behind him stepped a page bearing an inkhorn and some paper on a huge silver salver.

But the King's interest in the Cumberland romance had given place to interest in his tree-planting, and it was with a preoccupied air that he scrawled hastily on a sheet of paper the words '*Release Mr. Michael Radcliffe*' and affixed his signature.

He bade the Queen also sign the document, saying with a smile that, after all, she was responsible both for the committal and the release; but Audrey doubted whether he even heard the grateful words with which she received the pardon. He turned abruptly away and began to talk to the gardeners, finally walking off with them to inspect the trees in the recently planted maze.

‘Now, if Mr. Radcliffe be a wise man,’ said the Queen with a bright, arch look, ‘he will not let the grass grow under his feet, but will wed you with haste and carry you safely back to the north country, where sedan chairs, they tell me, are unknown. He is a lucky man to have won so brave a lady for his bride.’

And with that kindly little speech ringing in her ears, Audrey, holding the precious letter for Lord Lucas safely clasped in her hand, curtsied low to the Queen and followed Lady Temple back to the coach, for it was agreed that no time should be lost and that the order for Michael’s release should be at once presented.

When they had left the precincts of Hampton Court and were rumbling slowly along towards the city, Audrey bent forward in the coach and threw her arms about Mary Denham’s neck.

‘’Tis your doing,’ she said, her eyes full of happy tears. ‘We shall owe the happiness of all our lives to you.’

‘Ay,’ said Lady Temple, smiling kindly upon them, ‘Mary hath ever had a quite unusual talent for the releasing of prisoners. You are by no means the first couple who owe her the happiness of their lives. And, my dear, let me give you a word of motherly counsel. Do not forget the Queen’s injunction. Delays are dangerous. Have no scruple as to wedding your released prisoner as soon as may be, and get him safely away from London. For your grandfather’s sake it were better

to return with what speed you may, and the roads will be ill to travel over as the autumn goes on.'

'Indeed,' said Audrey, blushing, 'if you think there is indeed nothing unseemly in such haste I would far rather that we were married at once, for I shall never be at rest about Michael till all is safely over.'

And though no one mentioned Henry Brownrigg's name they all three thought of him, fearing greatly lest the man who had been foiled so many times should at the last succeed in getting the revenge he eagerly craved.

CHAPTER XLI

Recollections of Michael Derwent.

WHEN I first entered the Tower of London, tired and heated with the long journey from the north and in the lowest spirits, I little dreamed that in that gloomy old fortress the greatest happiness of my life was to come to me. Yet so it proved, for it was there that I learnt through that best of friends, Mistress Mary Denham, that my hope was indeed realised, that the dismal doubt lest Sir Francis Salkeld's son should win Audrey's hand was for ever banished, and that I knew at last that my dear love cared for me and would accept my suit.

Yet even after that day of rapture when with her own lips she promised to be my wife, there were dark times of trouble for us.

Enderby, that chattering magpie, whose tongue seemed fated to work me mischief, nearly sent me off my head altogether by telling me without the least preparation the dire news of Audrey's mysterious disappearance, and had it not been for my dear love's brave determination to escape at all costs from the house to which that villain Brownrigg had caused her to be carried, I don't think I could have borne up against the torture of having to wait helplessly in my narrow prison cell, not knowing in the least what was befalling her.

But when, on a fair September morning, she came with Mistress Denham to see me, and I found that she

was unharmed and had baffled the Under-Sheriff, the sight of her speedily cured me; save that even now—when no danger threatens us—I have a foolish fear of letting her be away from me, as though the shadow of that past agony still lurked behind and kept me more or less its slave; and many a time I have been so far unmanned as to return in the middle of a day's hunting, unable to endure the torturing anxiety any longer.

However, this is anticipating, and I must set down, ere ending these recollections, the account of how, on that very day when Audrey had safely returned, my imprisonment was brought to a most happy end. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon when my Lord Lucas, attended by some of the guard, came up the staircase of the Bloody Tower, and entering my room, with a civil greeting handed me a paper. I thought it was to bid me to some sort of examination, since those in authority were most anxious to find out all that they could with regard to the Jacobite conspiracy, and on unfolding the sheet I could hardly believe that I read aright, for it was nothing less than the order for my release procured by Audrey at Hampton Court and bearing the signatures of the King and Queen.

'You leave us under happier circumstances than most inmates of this room have done,' said Lord Lucas with a smile. 'Twas from here that Colonel Sydney went to the scaffold; while for you, sir, my Lady Temple's coach waits, and within it the fair lady from the north country whose story has made so much talk in the town. Egad! sir, you are a very lucky man, and I swear that I'm half inclined to envy you.'

He took leave of me very kindly. One of the warders carried down my possessions, and in a few minutes I stepped forth from that grim old gateway which I had entered with such dark forebodings, and was speedily being driven through the city streets.

Lady Temple plied me with questions, and Mistress Denham, with her kind brown eyes, watched our happiness with an air of great content, while Audrey, with her hand clasped fast in mine, leant back in her corner of the coach, somewhat pale with the excitement and fatigue of the day, yet with the look of a happy child in her face. It seemed to me that our journey through life together began in that very hour, nor did I find it difficult to persuade her to let our marriage take place as soon as the arrangements could possibly be made. She answered frankly that every one from the Queen downward advised it, and that she was perfectly willing, if it could be managed, that the ceremony should, as far as possible, be a quiet one, with none of the usual merrymaking and publicity.

And so it came to pass that by the time we had reached Norfolk Street all was settled, and Lady Temple had promised to be present at the church. I could have smiled to think how strangely this arrival at Sir William Denham's contrasted with my arrival in the previous autumn with Sir Wilfrid Lawson. In truth, I had been a most moody and miserable fellow on that night, when, in company with Mr. Ambrose Newfold, the chaplain, I had waited, hungry and sore-hearted, in the little cheerless room at the back of the house. Now, with Audrey beside me, and the talk running upon the arrangements for our wedding, how different a place the world seemed to me! Yet the house was absolutely unchanged: there was old Thomas, the butler, with his familiar face, as shrewd and discriminating as ever, and there were Lady Denham with her kind greeting, and Sir William sitting over *Willoughby on Birds* as though he had never moved since the last time I saw him.

They, one and all, gave me the most cordial of welcomes, and when later in the evening Hugo Wharncliffe and his wife came in to congratulate us, Mary per-

suaded him to sing the song that old Zinogle had taught him, and in his wonderfully sweet tenor voice he gave us a rendering of that quaint old ballad of *The Prickly Bush*, which had rung in my head all through the time I had lain in the Tower.

We were married one sunny October morning in the Church of St. Dunstan, Fleet Street, the very church where, twenty-three years before, my pretty mother had plighted her troth to John Radcliffe. As we passed out again into the street a strange thing happened. One of the horses belonging to the Denham coach began to rear and plunge, so that we were forced to stand for a minute before getting in. The sun was streaming down upon us in a flood of golden brightness, and it made Audrey's white dress and close-fitting, fur-bordered bodice glisten like snow mountains on a bright, frosty day. She had her sunny brown hair dressed high in the way then fashionable, and had put on for the first time one of the white lace mantillas which London ladies wore in those days on their heads. Now, as we waited there while they strove to quiet the kicking horse, who should pass by but an aged, white-haired man in a suit of brown leather. It was none other than George Fox, the Quaker, and, to my surprise and pleasure, he at once recognised me.

'I have heard of thy imprisonment and thy many troubles,' he said with that glance of the eyes which meant so much more than a conventional greeting. 'And right glad am I, friend, to see that joy hath now been sent to thee. On this very spot long ago I saw thy mother. God grant thee a happier life; and forget not this waiting on the threshold my friends, ere going forth into the world. Just in this fashion should we each day learn to stand still in the Light ere going forth on our work.'

And with that he went on, and we saw him no more.

For not many months later the old man, after the briefest of illnesses, passed quietly away, to see face to face the Light he had so untiringly preached.

‘Mic,’ said Audrey to me gently as we drove through Temple Bar, ‘he has just the same heavenly look in his face as Cousin Nathaniel Radcliffe. We will take that quaint saying of his, “Stand still in the Light,” as our motto.’

We had been married on a Saturday, and after a quiet Sunday in Norfolk Street, we bade farewell to those who had been so good to us in London, and set off early on Monday morning by the York coach, having extorted a promise from Mistress Mary Denham to visit us in the north some time in the following summer.

‘Now, were it any other lady who had made that promise I should doubt its fulfilment,’ said Audrey, ‘but Mary seems a born traveller, and I verily believe is never so happy as when seeing “Fresh fields and pastures new.” She will really come and see us at Goldrill House, and with her, as Lady Temple told me, it is “Once a friend always a friend.”’

‘What an extraordinary old gentleman!’ I exclaimed, drawing her attention to a tall, bent old man in a grey periwig and an enormous grey cloak which was so arranged as completely to swathe his throat and mouth.

‘I do trust he is not coming inside,’ said Audrey. ‘He will take up so much room.’

And we both gave a sigh of relief when the old man climbed up beside the coachman.

There certainly was something strange about this gentleman’s movements, and he afforded us much amusement. When the other travellers hastened from the coach to the inns at which we stopped on the road, eager to get warmed and fed, this old man of the cloak never put in an appearance. Whether he fed elsewhere we could not discover, but when we came out again there

he was on the box-seat like Patience on a monument, and as he was extremely deaf and could only hear the driver's remarks when they were actually bawled into his ear, it was impossible to show him any civility, or even to pass a remark as to the weather or the discomforts of the journey. We called him the 'Muffled Mystery,' for none of the passengers seemed to know anything about him, and when at length we reached York and repaired to the house of the Denham's friends where Audrey had rested on her journey to the south, the 'Muffled Mystery' had only just clambered down from the coach-box, and was slowly counting out coin for the customary fees to the driver and the guard.

On Sunday we rested at York, then set out for the rest of the journey on horseback, Audrey riding her mare Firefly, which had been stabled at York all this time, and I contenting myself with hiring on the road, or, as they call it, riding post. We were fortunate enough to fall in at Ripon with my old school-fellow, John Williamson, and his brother, so that, with our grooms, we made a fair cavalcade, and ran less risk of being attacked by highwaymen. And of this I was thankful enough, for when we reached Richmond they told us some uncomfortable stories of travellers who had lately been robbed, and I could see that Audrey was somewhat nervous.

Perhaps on account of this we were all the more determined to keep up her spirits on the next day's journey, which chanced to be the worst of the road, betwixt Richmond and Appleby. At any rate we were all extremely merry, when just as the light was beginning to fade a little in the afternoon, and we knew that we had not much further to travel before reaching the town, the sound of a pistol-shot startled us into sudden silence.

'There's mischief afoot,' said John Williamson as a second shot was heard. 'Let us press on at a good pace;

the sight of our cavalcade will drive off any highway-men.'

Audrey was the very first to respond to the suggestion; when danger actually came she was never afraid, and touching up Firefly, she pressed on eagerly, thinking that perhaps we might help some luckless and solitary traveller.

And, sure enough, directly we came in sight, a couple of villainous-looking highwaymen instantly made off at full speed, but their hapless victim lay face downwards on the strip of grass by the roadside, nor did he stir at our approach.

'Oh, Mic!' said Audrey, 'it is the "Muffled Mystery!" See, poor old gentleman! there is blood dyeing his grey peruke.'

We hastily dismounted and bent over the wounded man. He moaned faintly as we raised him and turned his face to the light. The thieves had left his rifled pockets hanging inside out, and had torn off his watch. The end of his broad watch-ribbon fluttered in the fresh breeze as though to tell its story.

'Take off his peruke, and let us bathe his temples,' said John Williamson; but as I obeyed there was a general exclamation of surprise and dismay, and looking more closely at the wounded man, I saw that the stranger who had passed for an infirm and bent, old veteran was none other than Henry Brownrigg.

We instinctively knew that no good purpose could have brought him back to the north, but for the moment there was nothing to be done save to try to staunch the blood which was flowing fast from a wound near the shoulder. We succeeded at length, but feared that a more dangerous wound had been caused by the second shot which had entered the body lower down and must have caused some bad internal injury, for it was evident that the Under-Sheriff was dying.

‘Ride on to Appleby,’ I said to the groom, ‘and see if you can bring with all speed a leech and a litter to carry him to the inn.’

The fellow hastily mounted and rode off at a gallop, while Audrey, who had been fetching water in a little flask from a stream by the roadside, drew near, and bending down over the wounded man, began to bathe his face and to moisten his lips. For a moment, as I remembered how the Under-Sheriff had brutally insulted her, how he had jilted her at the time of her need, and had tortured her by the cruel trap he had set in London, I could hardly endure to see her touch him.

But death shames all selfish thoughts, and ere long I saw that she was only doing what any true woman would do for one in the last extremity.

The cold water revived the dying man for a time, and opening his eyes, he looked at us in a furtive, shrinking way.

‘Don’t!’ he gasped, as though the touch of her hands burnt him. ‘I was here for revenge! I made sure of being able to pick a quarrel with your husband betwixt York and Penrith and of forcing him at length to fight. But everything thwarts me! The Williamsons spoiled all, and now these vile thieves——’

He broke off with a groan.

‘They have sorely hurt you, I fear,’ said Audrey. ‘Yet they have saved you from being a murderer. Henry, have you no message for your mother?’

He did not reply, but lay with closed eyes as though thinking over her words. The savage hatred slowly died out of his face, and seeing how painfully he laboured for breath, I lifted him as gently as I could, which for the time seemed to ease him.

He opened his eyes again and looked at me in a perplexed way.

‘What! is it you?’ he murmured very faintly. ‘I

wronged you. Let John Williamson tell my mother that I——’ The words died away into a confused murmur, and his mind began to wander a little, for when next he spoke it was to call out passionately: ‘These robbers have thwarted me! I’m baulked again!’

Audrey, with tears streaming down her face, once more moistened his parched lips, and this seemed to bring him to himself.

‘You are right,’ he murmured. ‘They have saved me from being a murderer.’

John Williamson offered to take my place and support the dying man, but I feared to hurt him by moving, and indeed it seemed as if every struggling breath must be the last. We listened eagerly for the sound of horse-hoofs on the road, longing for the arrival of the leech. But all was still; only in the distance we could hear the lowing of cattle, and the cawing of the rooks as they swept by overhead on their homeward way.

There was nothing more to be done. Audrey knelt on the grass with her face hidden in her hands, and I knew that she prayed for the man who had given her such bitter pain. The rest of us just waited, watching intently the shadow that was creeping over the face of the Under-Sheriff.

At last I felt a convulsive struggle pass through the strong frame I supported. He half raised himself with a last effort.

‘My God!’ he gasped. ‘Forgive——!’

And with that his head fell back again on my shoulder. All was over.

When the leech came from Appleby there was naught for him to do, save to assure us that we could not possibly have saved Henry Brownrigg’s life. The second pistol-shot had placed him beyond human help, and it only remained for us now to carry the body to Appleby,

and to give evidence before the magistrate there as to the highwaymen who by this time had, of course, made good their escape.

The news was carried to Mrs. Brownrigg at Millbeck Hall by the Williamsons, and the Under-Sheriff's funeral took place at Crosthwaite five days later.

Audrey was so greatly upset, however, by all she had been through, that we were forced to spend the next month with the Aglionbys at Penrith that she might recover her health before travelling on to Derwentwater. I was not sorry to have the chance of resting there, for it enabled me to see something of my grandfather Carleton at Carleton Manor, and his interest in the clearing up of the mystery as to my birth brought a genuine gleam of pleasure into the sad life the poor old man had for so many years led.

Moreover, Penrith was within easy reach of our future home, and Sir Nicholas wrote to beg me to have all things put in order there, so that we could, after a brief stay with him at Lord's Island, settle down comfortably in a house of our own.

Audrey soon began to take keen interest in the arrangements, and, as soon as great-aunt Aglionby would allow her to undertake the expedition, we rode from Penrith to Ulleswater, and there, the day being fine and the water journey likely to prove less tiring, took a boat and sailed to Patterdale.

It was the second anniversary of King William's landing at Tor Bay, and much the same bright autumnal weather as it had been two years before when we had taken that ramble in Borrowdale and had found the miniature.

Mrs. Aglionby had insisted on our bringing a number of rugs and wraps, and with these I made a warm couch for Audrey in the boat, and leaving the man to manage the sail, we lounged luxuriously in the stern, my little

wife's head resting comfortably on my shoulder, for she was wearied with the ride from Penrith.

The wind, though fresh, was not cold, and I never saw anything more wild and beautiful than the wooded shore and the rugged mountains which rose majestically in front of us. At the far end lay Helvellyn and a peaked mountain which the man told us was called *Catchedecam*. The early gales had thinned the trees, but there were russet leaves still lingering on the oaks, and crimson touches on the maples, besides a wonderful blending of every shade of brown and gold on the hills near Howtown, where the green of the grass only showed here and there in patches, so thickly did the brake fern grow.

Just as we passed Gowbarrow Park the boatman called out: 'Look yonder, sir, there are the red deer.'

And glancing round, we saw one of the prettiest sights we had ever witnessed, for a herd of the beautiful creatures came down the grassy slope to drink, their branching antlers and dappled coats showing out finely against the blue of the water.

We seemed to be sailing quietly into a paradise of beauty, and Audrey's delight, as we passed close under Stybarrow Crag, with its grey heights rising sheer up from the water, knew no bounds.

'To tell the truth, Mic,' she said, 'dearly as I love Derwentwater, 'tis a great comfort to feel we shall start afresh where there can be no sad memories. Do you think people feel like that when they reach the other world?'

'Perhaps they do,' I said. 'Anyhow, dear heart, here we will try, as George Fox bade us, to stand still in the Light.'

The boatman set us down at the extreme end of Ulleswater in a somewhat marshy field, and a walk of about half a mile brought us to the Goldrill estate. The place

had been untenanted, save by a farm bailiff and his sister, since the death of my father's second wife, and it was greatly out of repair. But already the carpenters were at work, and a cheerful sound of hammering and whistling reached us as we walked down the avenue to the old grey house.

For the first time I realised that I was the heir and that the place would indeed be my own; and for one who had eaten the bread of charity for twenty years and had thought himself lucky to earn an annual salary of twenty pounds since reaching manhood, the feeling was strange indeed. Was it all a dream? And should I wake to find myself back in the pele tower at Isel Hall, once more Sir Wilfrid Lawson's private secretary?

I drew my wife's hand more closely within my arm, and looked down into her sweet face for comfort and assurance.

We had just passed the side of the house and were stepping on to the terrace walk near the front windows, when I saw her pale cheek flush with pleasure, all her youth and beauty returning in that glow of delight which thrilled through her as she saw the exquisite view which greeted us.

'Why, Mic!' she cried, 'I feel like the Queen of Sheba! The half was not told me! You spoke of the winding stream and the green fields, but you never said that glorious mountain rose just before our very windows. I have lost my bearings. Can it be Helvellyn?'

'Indeed, no,' I said, laughing. 'Beautiful as it is, it rejoices in the unromantic name of Low Hartsop Dod!'

And at that she laughed right merrily, vowing that we ought to christen it afresh. 'Though, after all,' she added, 'as I used to say to you in old days, Mic, why trouble about a name?'

'As I told you then, it makes all the difference some-

times betwixt honour and dishonour,' I said, looking into her sweet grey eyes. 'Would you have wedded me, do you think, had I been forced always to remain Michael Derwent, the Borrowdale foundling?'

'Mic,' she said earnestly, 'I would have loved you every bit as well and have wedded you, had I understood my own heart aright. But I was like a child at school that reckons amiss: all the sum worked out wrong and had to be sponged off the slate and begun once more. How happy a thing it is that one is allowed to start afresh! It hurts me to think that it has meant tears and grief and trouble to others beside myself, but perhaps 'tis the only way we can learn our lessons.'

As she spoke she clung more closely to me.

I stooped to kiss her, and we stood there together in the sunlight watching the Goldrill Beck as it wound its peaceful way through the green pastures.

The robins sang in the mountain-ash trees, making me think of that dark day when I had waited at the foot of the Styhead Pass and had had the vision of my mother; and with the bird's blithe song there rose in me a confident hope that our lives, once so troubled, might pass serenely on—quietly serving the land like that winding stream—until they were merged in the wider life beyond, when

'Long eternity shall greet our bliss
With an individual kiss ;
And joy shall overtake us as a flood.'

THE END.



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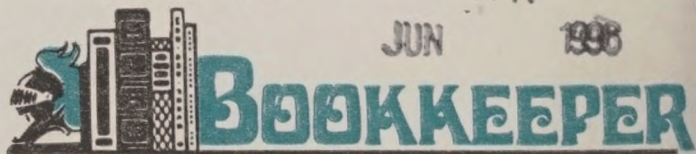
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